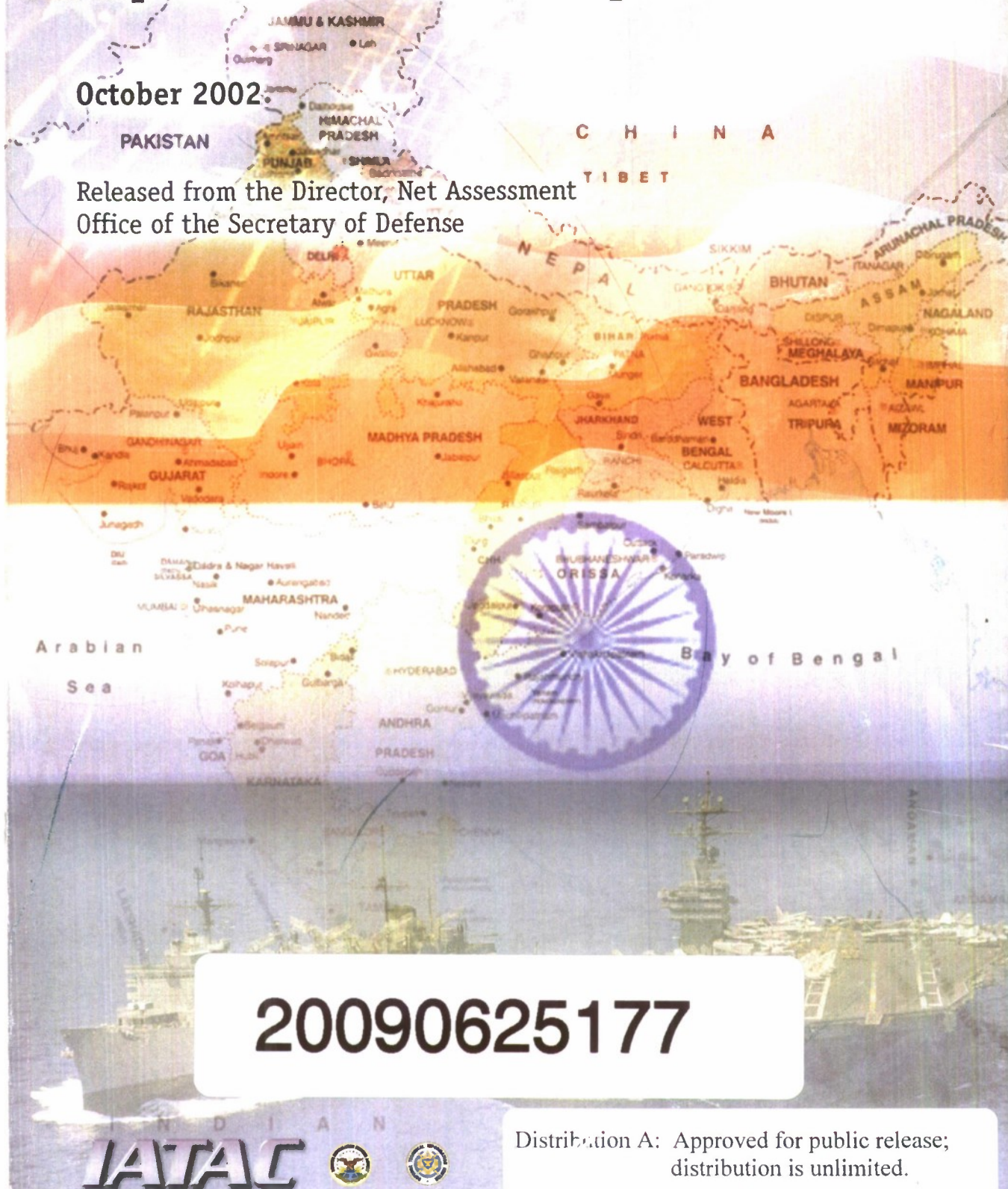


# Indo-U.S. Military Relationship: Expectations and Perceptions

October 2002

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# **Indo-U.S. Military Relationship:**

## **Expectations and Perceptions**

October 2002

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**Author:**

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Juli A. MacDonald  
Washington, DC



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# Executive Summary

## Study Objectives

**T**hrough in-depth interviews, this study explores the thinking of decisionmakers in the United States and India who are responsible for building a closer Indo-U.S. military relationship. It examines their understandings of the strategic rationale for the relationship; what the relationship should achieve and what it should avoid; expectations, reservations, and prejudices of each side toward the other; and how each side believes the relationship might be best organized and toward what ends. The Director, Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense sponsored this study to reveal opportunities for and impediments to military-to-military cooperation that might not be obvious to everyone, expose areas of agreement and misunderstandings that can affect decisionmaking, and enrich the dialogue between the two sides.

## Different Views of the Strategic Environment

The interviews revealed stark differences in how the Indians and Americans view Asia generally and the Indian Ocean region specifically.

For Indian military personnel, strategists, and policymakers alike, India's key strategic interests extend from the Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca and from Central Asia to Antarctica: the "Indian Ocean Basin." They argue that India sits in the center of this region, and that the strategic challenges are interrelated, interactive, and not easily disaggregated into discrete national security problems. Moreover, India aspires to play a larger role in all of the regions that compose the Indian Ocean Basin. Specifically, Indians seek to be regarded as "an economic and political role model" and to act as a regional stabilizer. This role will require new and expanded applications of military power. India will endeavor to ensure that no element inimical to India's interests emerges in this region. In particular, this means preventing the Indian Ocean Basin from becoming a battleground for super-power competitions.

The dynamic Indian Ocean Basin is plagued with fragile governments, porous borders, ethnic and religious diversity, economic underdevelopment, and an assertive regional power—China. The threats most frequently cited by the Indians include—

- **China**—China was repeatedly identified as a long-term strategic threat that is “encircling” India and as an economic competitor. For the Indians, the threats posed by China are multidimensional—strategic, military, economic, environmental, and social.
- **Pakistan**—Indians view Pakistan as an increasingly destabilizing threat for India and the region because of its three-pronged strategy against India: terrorism (sub-conventional warfare), proxy war, and finally, nuclear blackmail, which permits Pakistan to prosecute its sub-conventional strategy; and because of Pakistan’s ability to leverage outside linkages to pursue each component of this strategy.
- **Energy Security/Maritime Security**—Piracy and terrorist threats to energy and merchant traffic threaten the sea lanes crisscrossing the Indian Ocean. For Indians, ensuring the safe passage of energy and other merchant ships through the Indian Ocean Basin promotes stability across Asia.
- **Demography**—The illegal influx of immigrants from Bangladesh and Nepal foment social tension, particularly between Muslims and Hindus.
- **Transnational Threats**—Narco-trafficking, terrorism, and Islamic fundamentalism are used by states or non-state actors either separately or in combination to threaten India or destabilize the region generally.

Indians would like the United States to play three roles as a strategic partner in their region. As described by an Indian brigadier, Indians expect the United States to be—

1. a stabilizing force in the region,
2. a protecting force when shared values and interests may be threatened, and
3. an enabling force that assists India in protecting its own national security interests.

For Americans, the Indian Ocean Basin as defined by the Indians does not exist as one discrete region. U.S. military and policymaking organizations divide Asia into different theaters or regions (e.g., the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Near East South Asia, Asia-Pacific) and apply multiple and overlapping analytical policy filters that include India in different contexts. Some Americans described the Indian Ocean Basin as lying on the periphery of other important regions that demand American attention (e.g., Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia). Others called it a “strategic crossroads” at which other discrete regions—the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and East Africa—converge. From a military perspective, the Indian

Ocean is divided down the center and assigned to two Unified Commands—U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). One American colonel underscored the different strategic views of Asia and the Indian Ocean Basin with this observation—

*When you see a map of Asia on the wall at the Indian Ministry of Defense, India sits at the center of Asia. The Indians see themselves located at the center of the world. For Americans, India has never been thought of as the center of Asia, but it lies on the periphery of regions where the United States has national security interests.*

Americans consistently defined U.S. concerns in a larger Asian context—

- **“Tinderboxes” in Asia**—China, Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, and India-Pakistan.
- **Renewed and emboldened insurgent groups** in Southeast Asia that will destabilize the region.
- **Weak global economy**—Globalization ensures that a weak economy in the United States could destabilize Asian states that are closely tied to the U.S. economy.
- **Destabilizing transborder threats**—Migration, narco-trafficking, cross-border terrorism, and piracy.
- **Failing states**—Lack of good governance in key critical countries (e.g., Indonesia and Pakistan) could have cascading destabilizing effects.

For Americans, a strategic and military relationship with India is a hedge against an uncertain and possibly threatening future security environment in Asia. If India is a partner, interviewees argued, the future environment may be less threatening and more easily managed.

## Areas of Strategic Convergence and Divergence

Interviews revealed that strategic interests converge on many issues, but that the American and Indian interpretation of these issues and their understanding of the role the United States or India should play often differed significantly.

### Sea Lane Protection—

#### **“The Most Promising Area of Cooperation”**

Protection of the sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) from the Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca represents the strongest area of strategic convergence. Indian



and American military officers believe that sea lane protection should include anti-piracy, counter-drug, counter-arms, anti-pollution and environmental remediation, and search and rescue operations. Indian policymakers cautioned that naval cooperation should go beyond the eastern SLOCs in the Bay of Bengal and Strait of Malacca to include the Strait of Hormuz and the Arabian Sea.

## China

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Indian and American views of China were strikingly similar—

- China is an emerging power regionally and globally whose strategic ambitions and military capabilities cannot be clearly defined.
- A viable, long-term Indo-U.S. relationship cannot be based on “containing” China, although China will loom large in the relationship.
- China must be kept out of the Indian Ocean region.

Indians noted that post-9/11, the Chinese feel “encircled by the Americans,” and they worry that China will respond by putting indirect pressure on areas that pose direct challenges to India’s security, for example, in Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and in the Persian Gulf.

Virtually all Indians wondered how India factors into U.S. thinking about China. Lurking beneath the surface of most interviews with Indians was a fear that the United States is a fickle and uncertain strategic partner, that it has not made a solid strategic choice to partner with India, and that it might change partners in Asia to India’s detriment as political administrations change.

## Central Asia

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For Indians, Central Asia touches most of their strategic hot buttons: terrorism, encirclement by China, energy exploration and transport, relations with Russia and Iran, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and drug smuggling. It is a region that they know well, where Indians believe many of their strategic interests intersect and converge with U.S. interests, and where cooperation between the United States and India would have a stabilizing effect on the region. In contrast, only a few American interviewees cited Central Asia (and Afghanistan) as an important area of Indo-U.S. military cooperation.

## Persian Gulf

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All Indians pointed to the Persian Gulf as a region for potential cooperation and strategic dialogue because five key security interests hinge on or include the Persian Gulf in important ways: energy security, regional stability, future of the Islamic world, WMD proliferation, and counter-terrorism. Most Indian interviewees see many unexplored opportunities for wide-reaching discussions about mutual concerns in the Persian Gulf (or West Asia) and believe that India is uniquely placed for three reasons—

1. India sits in the center of the Islamic world that spans from Northern Africa to Southeast Asia.
2. India has close relationships with nearly all Islamic states in the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia that could be leveraged for mutual benefit.
3. As the second largest Muslim country in the world, India can help the United States understand the “Muslim psyche.”

In contrast, fewer than a quarter of the American interviewees—all but two of them were located in Washington—mentioned the Persian Gulf as an area of India’s strategic concern, and even fewer identified the Persian Gulf as an area where U.S. and Indian interests might converge.

## Non-Proliferation

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Americans and Indians share a commitment to basic non-proliferation principles (e.g., impeding proliferation of WMD to other states and non-state actors, and securing all nuclear material and facilities). Moreover, both militaries believe that cooperation on non-proliferation issues would be a “win-win situation.” At the same time, both militaries are concerned that non-proliferation policies will continue to plague the military-to-military relationship because a relatively small but determined non-proliferation constituency in the United States refuses to accept India’s nuclear capability and treats India as a proliferator.

Indians assert that non-proliferation will continue to be an obstacle to greater cooperation until the United States accepts India as a nuclear power and treats it as a nuclear “friend.” Indians complained about what they see as different policies coming from the U.S. Department of State—which tends to treat India as a dangerous “proliferator”—and the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD)—which accepts India’s nuclear capability and wants to embrace India as a strategic partner.

## War on Terrorism

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The war on terrorism created a new context and impetus for the Indo-U.S. relationship. Despite the success of existing counter-terrorism initiatives under the Joint Working Group on Terrorism, Americans and Indians cited three reasons for doubting sustained convergence on counter-terrorism: different definitions of the terrorist threat (e.g., international versus regional view of the threat); divergent views on the roots and sources of terrorism (e.g., Pakistan is the root of the problem, not part of the solution); and Indian concerns about spillover during the next phase of U.S. war on terrorism, particularly if the next phase of the campaign destabilizes the Persian Gulf.

## Common Democratic Values

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Both Indians and Americans claim that democracy is an important rationale for a military relationship, and both extol the virtue of spreading democratic values. But the rhetoric about democratic values also engenders cynicism among the Indians, who bridle at U.S. tolerance of undemocratic Pakistan. Moreover, Indians believe that the appropriate “democratic” model for their region is not the United States, but India itself, for two reasons: first, the Indian model is better attuned to the challenges faced by developing countries; second, Indians have more confidence in democracy’s resilience and strength to organize and stabilize societies.

## Economic Cooperation

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Indians and Americans agree that a strong economic relationship will bolster military cooperation and will be the “glue” of an enduring relationship. Moreover, Indians believe that increased U.S. economic stakes in India will mitigate the unpredictability of congressional policies aimed at India and could reduce the risk of future sanctions.

Americans believe that if a robust economic relationship is to develop, the responsibility for building this foundation lies solely with the Indians—India must create the environment that will attract U.S. business. In contrast, many Indians believe that a stronger Indo-U.S. economic relationship will naturally flow from a strategic relationship, as was the case when the United States “opened China” in the early 1970s. An underlying theme emerges from all of the Indian interviews: India is opening to the world, and it is an opportunity for the United States either to seize or to lose.

## Pakistan

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American and Indian perceptions diverge fundamentally on the nature or extent of U.S. involvement in the Indo-Pakistan conflict. Americans tend to believe that the United States should play a role in resolving this historic conflict; that without U.S. intervention of some kind a conflict might escalate out of control; and that solving the



Kashmir conflict will fundamentally change the region, freeing the United States of having to choose sides each time a crisis erupts. For Americans, the United States is trying to balance short-term crisis management priorities in the war on terrorism with Pakistan and a long-term objective of building a strategic relationship with India.

In contrast, most Indians rejected any role for the United States as a peacemaker/mediator between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute and doubt that the problems between India and Pakistan will be resolved with an agreement over Kashmir—the root of the problem with Pakistan lies not with Kashmir but with the Pakistani's anti-India ideology. Therefore, Indians stressed that the U.S. role in the Indo-Pakistan conflict should be confined to putting strong pressure on Pakistan to change the character of the Pakistani state—e.g., to make it democratic, economically viable, and terrorist free. For Indians, Pakistan has successfully kept India tied down and prevented India from being able to extend itself beyond South Asia. One Indian strategic thinker described Pakistan as a “ball and chain around India's neck.”

Americans' characterizations of U.S. relations with India and Pakistan ranged from, “the United States is sitting on the hyphen between Pakistan and India, trying to jawbone both sides” to “the United States will not balance its policy between the two states but treat each state based on its own merits.” Indians argued that the former characterization of U.S. policy best reflects U.S. action, and warn against any attempt to balance U.S. relations with two states that are not equal—India is superior in all areas and has more to offer the United States.

## India's Relationship With Russia

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For Indians, Russia represents India's “most dependable strategic partner”—which includes being a reliable weapons supplier—and its most valuable “strategic option.” Indians continue to harbor deeply held fears that the American tendency “to view the world as black and white” might force India to choose between the United States and Russia or limit its relationship with Russia. Indians asserted that any relationship with the United States must be “mutually exclusive.” But many Indians (mostly retired military officers) also argued that if they had to choose tomorrow between the United States and Russia they would opt for Russia—the supplier of 70 percent of its military equipment and joint-development agreements—due to the current uncertainty about access to advanced U.S. technologies and the possible unreliability of the United States as a supplier. Nevertheless, over the medium- and long-term, the Indian military seeks to reduce its dependence on Russia by diversifying defense suppliers, particularly since Russia no longer offers the special ruble-rupee deals that India enjoyed during the Soviet era.

In contrast, Americans were not worried about India's strategic relationship with Russia, though many conceded that residual American suspicion of the Indo-Russian relationship will influence technology transfer decisions.



# Military Cooperation: Objectives, Priorities, and Approaches

The interviews suggest that Indians and Americans have different ideas about the ultimate objectives for a military-to-military relationship and how to achieve them.

## The American View

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The U.S. military wants a capable partner in Asia that can take on more responsibility for low-end operations in Asia; that provides new training opportunities; and that will ultimately provide basing and access for U.S. power projection. For many, India is the most attractive partner in the region because of its strategic location and size and relative sophistication of its military. Eventual U.S. military access to Indian military infrastructure would represent a critical “strategic hedge” against dramatic or evolutionary changes in traditional U.S. relationships in Asia (e.g., Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia). To achieve these objectives, American military officers seek to build trust, communication, and understanding of each other’s systems through service-to-service initiatives (e.g., joint training exercises, multilateral exercises, IMET exchanges), focusing on areas where both militaries benefit, such as high-altitude training, joint exercises with special forces, and search and rescue exercises. Over time, they believe that the military relationship should result in shared technology and capabilities, and ultimately they would like to be able to respond jointly to regional crises.

## The Indian View

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The Indian priorities for building a military relationship are the reverse. Although they recognize that the relationship will develop slowly, they demand tangible and immediate results that demonstrate the United States’ commitment.

- **Technology Transfer—India’s Touchstone Issue.** Most Indians explicitly linked technology cooperation (or technology transfer) to success at other levels of military cooperation (e.g., service-to-service cooperation and strategic dialogue). Indians’ concerns about husbanding and applying technology arise from India’s historical experience of repeatedly being defeated by invaders with superior technology. The message from the Indians at all levels was nearly uniform: Technology transfer must be the engine of the relationship and the “acid test” of U.S. commitment. For Indians, technology transfer carries both practical and symbolic importance. Regarding the latter, technology transfer demonstrates U.S. confidence and trust in the relationship, confirms American understanding of India’s strategic importance, and signals that the United States will treat India as a friend.

- **Increased U.S. Investment in the Indian Defense Sector**—For most Indians, the centerpiece of any military relationship will be economic. Linking the two defense industrial bases (DIBs) will create many opportunities for collaboration (e.g., space cooperation, co-development, cooperative research and development), and will insulate the relationship from political changes (in either country) and policy disagreements.
- **A Partnership of Equals**—All Indian interviewees warned that only a military-to-military relationship based on equality would be acceptable to Indian leadership. They expect “an adult-to-adult” relationship, not a “patron-client” or a “parent-child” relationship. For Indians, equality means how they are treated more than what should be expected of them.
- **Reciprocity**—Indians believe that equal treatment is embodied, above all else, in reciprocity. For example, the Indians complained of an “asymmetry of access” in which the Americans are receiving greater access to Indian officials in Delhi than Indians are receiving to Americans in Washington and warned that if this persisted, it could slowly strangle the relationship because it gives the Indians the appearance of a “patron-client” arrangement.
- **Normalcy**—Indian policymakers want a normal relationship in which India is treated the same way the United States would treat its other friends and allies.
- **Symbiosis**—Indians believe that they will benefit from the military relationship if they are connected to infrastructure on the continental United States (CONUS).
- **Sensitivity**—Indians want American policymakers to be more sensitive to India’s concerns and interests in its “extended security horizon.” This includes increased consultation in developing security policy in regions of shared concern that have a direct or indirect impact on India’s security interests.

In an obvious contradiction, Indians expect the U.S. military, as the “senior partner,” to take the lead in building the military-to-military relationship. For the Indian military, all actions required to push the relationship forward (e.g., treating India as an equal partner, giving India access to technology, building a robust economic relationship) rest on American shoulders, not Indian.

## Impediments to Building an Enduring Strategic Relationship

The interviews revealed that both the U.S. and Indian systems are poorly organized to build a robust military relationship that maximizes the strategic benefits for both sides.

Both sides complained about the bureaucratic hurdles in each other's system. Indians complained that the U.S. bureaucracy can be as impenetrable and non-responsive as the Indian bureaucracy, particularly the U.S. licensing process. Many Americans accuse their Indian counterparts of being "non-responsive" because Indian communications with their American counterparts are inevitably late, incomplete, or non-existent, and they describe the Indian bureaucracy as rigid and centralized, and unwilling to support individual decisionmaking. Americans and Indians agreed that as the Indo-U.S. military relationship begins to evolve beyond high-level talks, it will, and in some cases, already has confronted structural constraints and institutional obstacles on both sides.

## On the U.S. Side—

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### The PACOM-CENTCOM Divide

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India sits along the PACOM and CENTCOM seam, thereby confusing both the strategic rationale for engaging India and the organizational means to do so. Both Americans and Indians understand that India is lost in a kind of "strategic ether" between two powerful unified commands. The Indians asked repeatedly why the U.S. military divides South Asia down the middle, when it makes perfect sense to them to join strategic issues that stretch through India from the Persian Gulf to Southeast Asia. This divide frustrates the Indians for three reasons—

- PACOM covers only half of India's strategic interests and concerns. Indians argue that many of India's most pressing strategic concerns and the areas, in their minds, most conducive to Indo-U.S. military cooperation lie outside of PACOM's area of responsibility (AOR): countering cross-border terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism; promoting stability in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf; and protecting energy flows from the Persian Gulf.
- This CENTCOM-PACOM divide creates serious breakdowns in communications between Washington and Delhi on these important issues, as was the case immediately after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The message conveyed by the Indians was nearly uniform: They believe PACOM has neither the authority nor the means to engage the U.S. military across India's full range of strategic interests.
- Indians note that they frequently seek to bypass PACOM by going straight to Washington to talk about issues that extend beyond the PACOM AOR or fall outside of PACOM's authority (e.g., technology transfer).

In contrast, most Americans touted the benefits of dividing India and Pakistan into separate AORs, arguing that including both states in the same AOR would compromise the credibility of each commander and make it impossible for them to build trust



and forge a satisfactory relationship with either state. Americans believe that Indians fundamentally misunderstand the unified commands' central role in designing and executing the military's security cooperation programs, which includes wielding power and authority and allocating the bulk of resources. (Indians counter that they understand the U.S. structure perfectly. They are not adverse to dealing with PACOM, but PACOM fails to serve all of their interests both geographically and functionally.)

## Lack of Common U.S. Engagement Objectives, Guidelines, and Practices

No shared view of India's importance to U.S. national security interests emerged from the interviews. Moreover, the interviews reveal that no common vision or programmatic guidelines inform the way different U.S. military organizations identify priorities or build engagement plans with India, leading to confusion, inconsistency, and, occasionally, contradictions among those DoD elements entrusted with building a military-to-military relationship. Different offices responsible for policy planning for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the services, and the Joint Staff all place India in different strategic or operational contexts. India's strategic location in Asia is defined in at least five distinct ways—Asia-Pacific; Middle East, Africa, and South Asia; South and Southeast Asia; Southeast and Central Asia; and Near East/South Asia. Both Americans and Indians observed that the U.S. engagement process lacks coordination and that few linkages appear to exist between the different components of a military-to-military relationship (e.g., foreign military sales and counter visits on one side, and security cooperation initiatives on the other). The organizations responsible for these different components of the relationship appear to base their decisions on different priorities and requirements, and each develops and implements its program with little understanding of how its decisions and activities might affect the activities of other U.S. national security entities.

These different approaches confuse the Indians, who sense a dichotomy on the American side between security cooperation strategy that flows from PACOM, on the one hand, and, on the other, the means to achieve it—i.e., high level exchanges, technology transfer, and foreign military sales (FMS)—that flow exclusively from the service headquarters. They argue that their natural inclination is to bypass PACOM to deal directly with service headquarters in Washington.

## "Owning" India—Long on Rhetoric and Short on Leadership and Resources

Many Americans believe the Indo-U.S. relationship requires that senior military leaders assume "ownership" of this rapidly evolving relationship. They worry that U.S. commitment to the new relationship is not deep enough to build trust with the Indians because real commitment will require that U.S. policy in other areas—such as space, non-proliferation, nuclear policy, and arms exports—change. The consensus view among American military interviewees (as of February 2002) is that no senior leadership has assumed "ownership" of security cooperation with India.

## On the Indian Side—

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### Lack of Bureaucratic Capacity to Support the Relationship

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Many Americans believe that India's organizational structure and its bureaucracy lack the capacity to support broad-based military cooperation and that these structural factors could dampen enthusiasm for engaging India in the future because its persistent unresponsiveness shapes the perceptions of future military leaders, who then might be less willing to work with the Indians. Americans identify three potential problems that stem from India's bureaucratic structure.

- **Asymmetry Exists in Institutional Capacity**—India lacks the institutional capability to support a broad-based relationship. Americans who interface with the MOD and military services have the impression that their Indian counterparts can handle only one initiative at a time.
- **Chokepoints in Bureaucratic Channels Impede Programs**—The Indian military's insulation from foreigners, except with approval of the Directorate General for Military Intelligence (DGMI), impedes program initiatives and the development of personal relationships.
- **Centralized Decision-making Contributes to Non-responsiveness and Indecisiveness**—India's highly centralized decisionmaking process in the MOD contrasts greatly from the U.S. system in which decisionmaking is decentralized and responsibility is delegated downward. Americans believe that India's structure slows the decisionmaking process significantly because lower level staff have little authority to make decisions, and more opportunities exist for issues to die before they reach decisionmakers.

### Civilian Control of the Military

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Many active and retired Indian military officers convey a uniform message: The Indian military must act within the highly restrictive boundaries created by their political leadership. For this reason, the Indian military prefers a top-down approach to building a relationship. They note that unprecedented agreement within the Indian establishment to build a military-to-military relationship with the United States has lowered many internal obstacles that obstructed direct military contact in the past, and the success of the reinvigorated Defense Policy Group (DPG) has provided Indian military officers with the political "cover" to discuss and plan security cooperation initiatives in more detail at an operational level at the service Executive Steering Groups (ESGs).



## Department of State: A Major Impediment

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Americans and Indians believe the U.S. Department of State represents a serious obstacle to developing the military-to-military relationship because it does not share DoD's longer term strategic view, and it possesses the power to stall the licensing process for technology transfer.

## Indian and American Perceptions of Each Other

The interviews revealed strongly held and often contradictory perceptions by the Indians and Americans of each other. Several themes emerged clearly from the interviews.

### Mutual Admiration

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All Indian military officers emphasized that their perceptions of the U.S. military are shaped by great respect and admiration for the U.S. military and the United States as a country. American views of the Indians range from being a professional and well-trained potential partner in Asia to a capable military constrained by poor quality equipment and infrastructure. American and Indian military officers argued that if the two militaries were left alone, they could naturally build a strong military relationship, observing that in the past, political obstacles repeatedly blocked progress.

### Persistent Distrust

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The Indians and Americans approach the prospects of a military-to-military relationship with persistent, and in some cases, deep-seated distrust that stems from different sources—

#### From the Indian Side—

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- **United States' Decades-long Support for Pakistan**—Indians worry that the U.S. military's past experience and comfort level with the Pakistani military might undermine cooperation because it generates a "default U.S. response to depend on Pakistan" to address problems in the region. The U.S. immediate response to the terrorist attacks on 9/11 reinforced this perception.
- **Unreliable Partner and Supplier**—All Indians questioned the willingness of the United States to enter into long-term strategic relationships. The America that Indians see is quick to entice and then dismiss strategic partners when U.S. interests change, and the Indians pointed repeatedly to America's on-again-off-again relationships with Pakistan and China as evidence. In particu-

lar, Indians distrust the United States as a potential supplier of arms and equipment because of the U.S. Congress' history of curtailing the transfer of supplies and technology to India from the United States and from third parties.

- **Uncertainty about America's Larger Strategic Vision**—Indians repeatedly asked: What does the United States want in India's part of the world, and where does India fit in this vision? Why is the United States so interested in India now? They worry about U.S. intentions in the region because they do not fully understand them. This uncertainty engenders anxiety about what the Indian military might have to give up in any relationship with the United States.
- **U.S. Superpower Status Could Limit India's Options**—Indians are resigned to the world being unipolar for many decades, recognizing that the United States will have the ability to act alone for the foreseeable future. For this reason, Indian military officers, in particular, believe that India must engage the U.S. military. But this realization also raises fears of India losing its freedom of action and strategic options, even when U.S. and Indian interests coincide, and of the second and third order consequences of U.S. actions that might have a direct impact on Indian security concerns.
- **American Ignorance of India's Political Culture**—Indians characterize most Americans as being ignorant of India's history and the complexities of India's internal political culture, which Indians insist influence and often constrain their policy choices and strategies.

### From the American Side—

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- **Indo-Soviet/Russia Relationship**—American views are shaped by India's past close relationship with the Soviet Union and its ongoing supplier/co-production relationship with Russia. One American colonel commented that the U.S. Government continues to be uncomfortable about sharing technology with India if "Russian scientists are running around the country."
- **Negative Experiences Working with the Indians in the Past**—Some Americans do not trust the Indians and believe the Indian assertions about China and Pakistan are designed to manipulate U.S. policy to achieve India's security objectives.
- **Inadequate Export Laws and Procedures**—Americans worry about the potential leakage of technology due to India's lack of export laws and procedures to guarantee the safeguarding of technologies.
- **Indian Sensitivity About Sovereignty**—Americans described Indians as hypersensitive about their "sovereignty," which Americans believe, stems from India's history of foreign occupation. Consequently, Indians tend to

view every unwanted/unanticipated American action with great suspicion and concern that it might adversely affect India's security or undermine its freedom of action.

- **Indians' Protocol Consciousness**—In American eyes, Indians are too protocol conscious, which leads to small missteps posing disproportionate difficulties to the relationship. A common theme from Americans is that, for Indians, the act is much more important than the substance; the theory is more important than the execution; and the tactic is more important than the strategy.

## Most Promising Opportunity for Cooperation

Americans and Indians broadly agree that naval cooperation represents one of the most promising areas of service-to-service cooperation for a number of reasons—

- Naval cooperation supports the strongest area of strategic convergence—sea lane protection.
- Naval cooperation in the Strait of Malacca represents the first concrete example of Indo-U.S. military cooperation.
- The Indian Navy is best equipped to lead military cooperation with the U.S. military because its mission dovetails naturally with the larger cooperation agenda.
- Naval cooperation can occur without causing political anxieties in India—the U.S. Navy leaves no “footprint” in India.
- India's Joint Eastern Command on the Nicobar Islands represents the only joint structure in the Indian military.





Figure 1: Map of Asia

## Introduction

**T**hrough in-depth interviews, this study explores the thinking of decisionmakers in the United States and India who are responsible for building a closer Indo-U.S. military relationship. It examines their understandings of the strategic rationale for the relationship; what the relationship should achieve and what it should avoid; expectations, reservations, and prejudices of each side toward the other; and how each side believes the relationship might be best organized and toward what ends. The Director, Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense sponsored this study to reveal opportunities for and impediments to military-to-military cooperation that might not be obvious to everyone, expose areas of agreement and misunderstandings that can affect decisionmaking, and enrich the dialogue between the two sides in ways that contribute to the evolution of a military-to-military relationship that is mutually advantageous.

The Indo-U.S. relationship began to assume a new character in 2000, 2 years after the U.S.-imposed sanctions on India in response to its nuclear tests of May 1998, which effectively stopped most military-to-military contact. Today strategic thinkers in both countries increasingly point to the two states' converging strategic interests in Asia. President Clinton's visit to India in spring 2000 and Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit to Washington in fall 2000 created a new momentum for a multifaceted strategic dialogue, which has accelerated under the Bush Administration. The U.S. war on terrorism after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (hereafter 9/11), triggered a period of unprecedented U.S. activity in, and policy focus on, South Asia, involving both India and Pakistan.

In this context, the Indo-U.S. military relationship has been revived and transformed. The U.S. and Indian militaries relaunched their military-to-military relationship in the post-9/11 environment by reconvening the Defense Policy Group (DPG) [1] in December 2001 after a 3-year hiatus. A flurry of meetings, high-level visits, and military exercises on all levels of the relationship have followed. For example, under the DPG umbrella, the Executive Steering Groups (ESGs) of the military services (Navy, Air Force, and Army), the Joint Technical Working Group, and the Security Cooperation Working Group have met at least once and in some case several times; new initiatives have been launched, such as the Cyber-warfare Working Group at the U.S. National



Security Council-Indian National Security Council Secretariat level; existing initiatives have been bolstered, such as the Joint Working Group on Terrorism; many high-level American and Indian visits have taken place in Washington and New Delhi; and a number of military-to-military exercises and joint operations have already been undertaken, including naval cooperation in the Strait of Malacca.

## Study Objectives

This study seeks to uncover and examine the underlying themes, issues, and concerns that are shaping the thinking and perceptions of American and Indian policy-makers and military officers as they interact on all levels to build a military-to-military relationship. It neither tracks the fast moving and constantly changing developments during this period of unprecedented Indo-U.S. engagement nor reports on the numerous meetings, activities, and visits that have taken place between the two militaries. At times, the issues raised by interviewees reflected current events at the time of the interview, but the interviews sought generally to elucidate the underlying issues driving the perceptions on both sides of the Indo-U.S. military relationship and to identify where the Indian and American understanding of the strategic issues converge and diverge.

This study highlights views and judgments of the interviewees that point to real issues that should be considered by Americans and Indians as the relationship moves forward. It does not offer solutions or policy prescriptions. By understanding the thinking of decisionmakers on both sides of the relationship, this study seeks to achieve three objectives—

- Promote a deeper understanding of the perceptions and expectations that will drive the relationship in both countries;
- Explore areas of divergence and convergence in U.S.-Indian perceptions of each other and the strategic environment; and
- Identify potential stumbling blocks and areas of opportunity for moving the relationship forward.

## Research Approach

The findings and insights in this report are based solely on interviews with Americans and Indians who are participating directly or indirectly in building the Indo-U.S. military relationship. On the U.S. side, this includes all ranks of military officers in Washington, DC, Hawaii, and New Delhi who are responsible for different aspects of building a military-to-military relationship with the Indians; high-ranking U.S. policy-makers and action officers in Washington, DC, who oversee the India policy portfolio; and several retired military officers and civilians who have had extensive experience

working with the Indians. On the Indian side, interviewees included active and retired military officers, all ranking brigadier general or above; high-level policy officials in New Delhi responsible for the U.S. policy portfolio; and influential strategic thinkers in India's national security community. All interviews were conducted between November 2001 and May 2002. The majority of interviews with Indians were conducted in New Delhi in December 2001 and February through March 2002.

The analysis and insights drawn from the interviews are qualitative, subjective, and based on impressions that emerged. No quantitative rigor was imposed on the data; instead, they capture the voices and ideas of the interviewees and frequently paraphrases their words to help the reader understand both the substance and tone of the response. The author used no outside sources to augment, substantiate, or support the views of the interviewees. If the interviews had been conducted 6 months earlier or later, or if a different mix of interviewees had been surveyed, the study might have reported different kinds of insights. [2]

In total, 82 interviews were conducted—42 with Americans and 40 with Indians. The interviewees can be divided into four categories: active military, retired military, government officials, and other. The "other" category includes discussions with prominent strategic thinkers in U.S. and Indian national security communities and roundtable discussions held at several Indian think tanks (see Table 1 for a breakout of the interviewee sample).

Table 1: Overview of Interviewee Sample

Category	American Interviewees	Indian Interviewees
Active Military	23	10
Retired Military	1	16
Government Officials	15	5
Other	3	9
Total	42	40

On the American side, interviews were conducted with policymakers and military officers who were actively involved with either shaping or implementing the Indo-U.S. military relationship at various levels and from various organizations in the policymaking process (e.g., U.S. Department of Defense [DoD], U.S. Department of State, and the National Security Council [NSC]) and from different parts of the military establishment (e.g., Office of the Secretary of Defense [OSD], service headquarters, Joint Staff, U.S. Pacific Command [PACOM] and the component commands, and the Defense Attaché Office in New Delhi). The interviewees' level of experience working with the Indians ranged from South Asia Foreign Area Officers (FAO) [3] and military officers who have served extended periods in India, to policymakers who interact with the Indians on a daily basis, to military officers with limited or no experience with India, including some who only recently met their Indian counterparts for the first time. [4]

On the Indian side, fewer active military officers were interviewed because their access to foreigners is restricted. Attempts were made to go through the official channel—the Directorate General of Military Intelligence in the Indian Ministry of Defence (MOD)—to schedule interviews with Indian military officers who are actively involved in the Indo-U.S. military relationship; but it was possible to schedule only several such interviews—several of which took place during high-level visits in Washington, DC. Generally, access to acting Indian military personnel was extremely limited, except for the Indian officers who are on assignment at the Indian Embassy in Washington, DC, or who are military analysts at several of India's think tanks. Indian policymakers in the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), the MOD, and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) who are directly involved with building the Indo-U.S. relationship were also interviewed. The majority of the Indian interviewees were retired senior military officers, most of whom remain active in India's national security community, including participating on the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB). [5] In addition, several roundtable sessions at the United Services Institute of India and the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis were held to elicit thinking from a diverse group of strategic analysts, retired and acting military officers, and retired Foreign Service officers. As with the Americans, the interviewees' level of experience working with Americans varied greatly, ranging from Indian policymakers who work with Americans daily, to Indian military officers who had never had contact with an American military officer. However, many of the retired military officers had been involved with Americans in the early 1990s.

The interviews with the Indians and Americans were based on the same set of questions. Nearly all interviewees were provided the questionnaire before the interview to give them an opportunity to consider the questions and prepare responses. [6] The interviews covered five broad categories of issues, each tailored to the appropriate American or Indian audience.

- Where do military decisionmakers and their representatives on both sides (those who shape their views and policy) see the threats and challenges in the Asia security environment in the next decade?
- What roles does each side ascribe to the other in the emerging strategic landscape?
- What is the role of the military in building an Indo-U.S. relationship? What are the most effective ways for the U.S. and Indian militaries to work together to support mutual interests?
- What engagement strategies should the U.S. and Indian militaries adopt in the short term? Medium term? Long term?
- What impediments exist to a closer Indo-U.S. relationship?



The interviews were free flowing, open-ended, and designed to take advantage of an interviewee's special knowledge or experience. All interviews were conducted on a non-attribution basis. As the interviews uncovered new issues or themes, these themes were pursued in new lines of inquiry with subsequent interviewees. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 6 hours. The author conducted all interviews.

## End Notes

1. The Defense Policy Group (DPG) is a policy-level steering group, led by the Under Secretary for Policy from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and the Indian Secretary of Defense, to create a political and strategic framework for the military-to-military relationship. The DPG was first initiated in 1995 under Secretary of Defense Perry and met three times over the course of 3 years. All of DPG's activities were suspended when sanctions were imposed in 1998. Under the umbrella of the DPG, service-specific working groups—referred to as Executive Steering Groups—and a Joint Technical Working Group were stood up to develop engagement-specific agendas. When the DPG was reconvened, the three ESGs and the Joint Technical Working Group were also reinstituted. In addition, a Security Cooperation Working Group was stood up to deal with foreign military sales issues.
2. In fact, a number of Indian and American interviewees recommended conducting the study again after a year because they believe that the findings could change dramatically after a year of intensive military cooperation.
3. South Asia FAOs have studied history, politics, and the culture of India as well as other states in South Asia, including Pakistan. They have studied at staff colleges in India, and several of the FAOs speak Hindi.
4. Two major gaps in the data collection on the American side exist. First, it must be noted that since the study focused on people interacting with the Indians, no one from U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) was interviewed for this study. Second, numerous attempts to schedule an interview with someone from the non-proliferation office in DoD failed; consequently, that perspective is absent in this study.
5. The NSAB comprises eminent persons outside of the government, including well-respected retired military chiefs from all of the services, with expertise in the fields of foreign affairs, external and internal security, defense, and economic security. The function of the NSAB is to advise the National Security Council (NSC) on issues related to national security. The board produced several authoritative studies, including India's draft nuclear doctrine and a critical assessment of the Indian military's performance during the Kargil incursions.
6. Several interviews scheduled at the last minute did not allow time for the interview questionnaire to be delivered to the interviewee beforehand.

# Views of the Strategic Environment

**T**his section explores how Americans and Indians view the strategic environment in Asia, how they perceive threats there, and what each side expects, on a strategic level, from an Indo-U.S. strategic relationship over the medium-term and long-term.

The interviews revealed stark differences in how the Americans and Indians view Asia generally and the Indian Ocean specifically. First, the vantage point of the two countries is fundamentally different. Indians envision themselves at the center of the dynamic Indian Ocean Basin, which is plagued with fragile governments, porous borders, ethnic and religious diversity, economic under-development, and a menacing regional power—China. These conditions pose real and immediate maritime and continental threats. For the Americans, the dynamic and fluid environment in Asia was far away, and less immediate to U.S. national security interests until the events of 9/11 focused U.S. attention there. Second, Indians and Americans use different analytical filters to understand the region, particularly the Indian Ocean Basin. Whereas Indians have a holistic view of their immediate strategic environment around the Indian Ocean, U.S. military and policymaking organizations apply multiple and overlapping analytical filters to the Indian Ocean and South Asia; and until recently (after the nuclear tests in 1998), little attention was paid to South Asia generally. Third, a more comprehensive picture of the strategic environment emerged from the interviews with the Indians than with the Americans because the Indian interviewees appeared to be much more concerned about communicating their perceptions of the strategic environment.

## Indian View of the Strategic Environment

Indian interviewees describe a remarkably consistent picture of India's current security environment. For Indian military men, strategists, and policymakers alike, India's key strategic interests extend from the Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca and from Central Asia to Antarctica: the "Indian Ocean Basin," in the words of many respondents. This focus reflects both India's strong historical preoccupations and, increasingly, what a retired Indian Lt. general referred to as challenges on India's "extended



security horizon” in Central Asia, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. They argue that India sits in the center of this region, and that the strategic challenges are interrelated, interactive, and not easily disaggregated into discrete national security problems.

India seeks to be the “preeminent power” in the Indian Ocean Basin in the next decade, according to a number of interviewees. According to a retired Lt. general and a prominent strategic thinker, whose views were shared by many Indian interviewees—

*India’s economic and security interests are inextricably tied to the regions around the Indian Ocean, for example, Southeast Asia, West Asia, and Central Asia. It will seek to be an economic and political role model and act as regional stabilizer that coordinates its policies with other states in the region. India will endeavor to ensure that no element inimical to India’s interests emerges in this region. Similarly, India seeks to prevent the region from becoming a battleground for super-power competitions.*

And...

*Indians view Asian stability in terms of an Indian Ocean framework. The British chose to colonize India because they sought a position where they could support their interests in Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf. After Independence, India did not reach out in these directions, partly because it focused on its internal development and partly because its outreach efforts were thwarted because India was the only democracy in the Indian Ocean. Today India would like to play an active role in the management of the region. It increasingly sees itself as a provider of security for the Indian Ocean Basin.*

The Indian interviewees describe a number of catalytic forces on India’s more expanded strategic horizon beginning in the 1990s. These include the collapse of the Soviet Union, which cut India free from its strategic anchor and undermined the robust Indo-Soviet defense supply and economic relationship; the emergence of China as a dynamic economy with the wealth and motives to expand militarily into areas of India’s strategic concern; Pakistan’s continuing instability, punctuated most recently by the war on terrorism; American presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia and Russia’s inability to secure India’s northern flank; and the 1990 American-led war in the Persian Gulf, which sharpened Indians’ focus on a number of emerging and evolving challenges and opportunities. They characterized India’s interests in the three regions—West Asia (by which they mean the Persian Gulf and the Middle East), Southeast Asia, and Central Asia as follows.

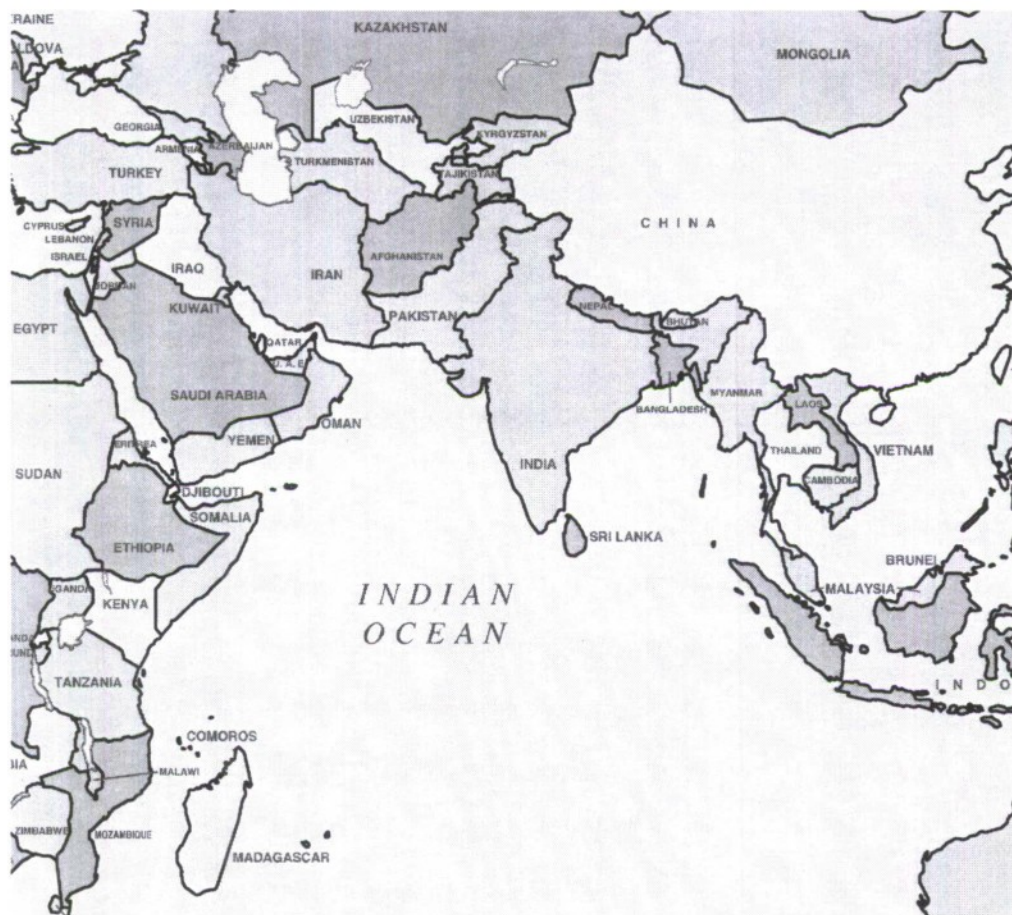


Figure 2: Indian's Extended Security Horizon—Indian Ocean Basin

## West Asia

India has four critical interests in West Asia—

- **Energy security**—India imports more than 60 percent of its oil from West Asia, and it has begun to sign 10–20 year natural gas contracts, both of which portend a long-term energy relationship with the Middle East.
- **The security of India's diaspora population in the Persian Gulf**—Indians compose the largest minority in the Gulf, with over three million Indians currently working throughout the region. These Indians remit millions of dollars annually to India.
- **Good relations with Islamic states that might be able to influence India's large Muslim minority**—Political imperatives driven by India's large Muslim population—second in size only to Indonesia—require India to maintain close relations with the West Asian Muslim states. Iran and Iraq are among India's closest friends in the region.

- **Engaging Israel**—In the past decade, India and Israel have developed a close strategic relationship, which includes technology transfer, a defense supply relationship, and trade.

An Indian journalist characterized India's relationship with West Asia as "an increasingly multi-layered network of linkages."

## Southeast Asia

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Indian concerns about Chinese influence spreading in Southeast Asia prompted India's "Look East" policy, which builds on India's cultural and historical ties in the region. Since the mid-1990s, India has sought to develop political, economic, and security relationships with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and has become a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). In addition, Indians look to Southeast Asia to diversify their energy imports away from West Asia. Indians anticipate that India will rely increasingly on Southeast Asia's abundant natural gas to meet its growing demand for that fuel. Several retired Indian military officers spoke of rising Islamic fundamentalism and instability in Indonesia as a combination that at best provides safe havens for terrorists and at worst could destabilize the entire region. Indians see Indonesia as a key, and increasingly fragile, part of India's strategic periphery.

## Central Asia

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India has no contiguous borders with Central Asia. However, Indian interviewees were quick to assert that India has deep historical and cultural links to Central Asia. Indians refer to Central Asia as their "extended strategic neighborhood," and they seek to build strong economic, political, and security relationships across the region. For Indians, Central Asia represents an extension of its regional competition with Pakistan, an access point to an emerging east-west economic corridor, and a potential source of energy to reduce India's dependence on West Asia. Indians also view Central Asia and until recently, Afghanistan, as sources of destabilizing Islamic extremism supported by Pakistan. To counter this threat, the Indians supported Afghanistan's Northern Alliance in its struggle against the Taliban, and it has pursued long-term strategic relationships with Uzbekistan and Iran. Indian interviewees anticipate that India's involvement in Afghanistan will increase.

## New U.S. Military Presence Creates New Uncertainty

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In the post-9/11 environment, Indian policymakers see a fundamentally new and rapidly changing strategic environment emerging. They attribute the enormous amount of uncertainty and fluidity in their region to the war on terrorism, which



has brought U.S. military presence in Central Asia and South Asia. A retired Indian brigadier characterized the dramatic change to the strategic environment like this—

*The U.S. military axis in Asia has changed dramatically after 9/11, shifting from a Middle East to Europe axis to a Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) to Pakistan axis. Overnight, the United States built a new security frontier through the middle of Asia, with NATO responsible for security at the rear of this new military axis. The United States will not retreat from this position but maintain a permanent presence in the region.*

The interviews revealed that Indians believe that the current U.S. objectives in the region coincide with India's security interests, including rooting out terrorist networks, stabilizing Afghanistan, and exerting pressure on President Musharraf to crack down on Islamic extremism and terrorism. Although no Indian overtly criticized the current U.S. military campaign, U.S. military presence in South Asia evoked two Indian responses: first, skepticism about the U.S. ability to achieve its objectives (which will be explored in detail in the next chapter), and second, anxiety about the implications of long-term U.S. presence in their region.

On the latter point, Indians expressed four different concerns related to the prospect of long-term U.S. military presence in the region.

- Prominent retired diplomats expressed extreme discomfort with permanent U.S. presence. They fear that its "super power" status will lead the United States to dominate the strategic agenda in the region. But they warn that India will not accept its interests being "filtered through a super power," particularly not in its own backyard. But even more worrisome for these Indians is the specter of a major divergence in Indo-U.S. interests in the region. These Indians ask: what leverage will India have over the United States if U.S. actions run counter to Indian interests?
- Many military officers and national security analysts voice concerns about China's response to a permanent U.S. presence in Central Asia. Several retired military officers characterized U.S. policy toward China as one of "encirclement"—now U.S. presence in Central Asia completes a full circle (see Chapter 3 for detail on how the Indians view China's responses to U.S. actions). They anticipate that China will respond to U.S. attempts to limit China's strategic maneuverability in ways that might threaten India's national security interests directly, for example, by increasing its activities along India's periphery in Myanmar, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Maldives.
- A small number of military officers believe that long-term U.S. presence in Central Asia could engender a new strategic competition between the United States and Russia, as the current goodwill wanes, which many Indians fear



might put India in a position in which it would have to choose sides (see Chapter 3 for detail).

- Many Indian policymakers and national security analysts fear that the next phase of the U.S. war on terrorism might destabilize areas in India's extended security horizon in ways that will have a deleterious impact on India's security interests, especially if the U.S. military targets Iraq or Iran.

## Indian View of Threats in Asia

The Indian interviewees spoke in great depth about the immediate and longer term threats that they see around them. In most instances, the Indians identify no direct role for the United States to assist them in countering their threats. The threats described below are not an inclusive list. Concerns, such as internal security, border security, energy security, and economic security, were raised in different contexts by a number of interviewees and will be elaborated on in Chapter 3. The following threats represent the most frequently mentioned themes in the interviews.

### China: The Long-Term Threat

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The collapse of the Soviet Union prompted the Indian Government to improve its relationship with China in the early 1990s. Several Indian policymakers highlighted their government's effort to foster better relations with China by engaging in confidence building measures (CBM), increasing trade ties, and generally avoiding any actions that would provoke a Chinese response. [7] And many interviewees believe that these efforts are slowly bearing fruit, but this has not prevented the Indian military from repeatedly identifying China as a threat. In fact, nearly all Indian interviewees identified China as India's long-term strategic threat that is "encircling" India and an economic competitor. [8] For the Indians, the Chinese threat is multidimensional. The following comments convey the broad spectrum of widely held concerns about China—

*The Chinese threat will emanate from natural economic tensions that will emerge as India's economy starts to grow. When India and China become economic rivals, China may be inclined to take actions "to brush India aside." India will need military capabilities strong enough to deter such Chinese provocations.*

*China's transfer of missile and nuclear technology to Pakistan represents a clear strategy to keep India tied down on its western front.*

*India and China share an approximately 4000 km-long border, with a large portion still disputed. Moreover, the Chinese continue to occupy Indian territory, which remains an intractable problem that the Chinese refuse to address.*

*We [the Indian military] see China pursuing a strategy to “encircle” India, in which it is increasing its activities and expanding its influence in Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, and in Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.*

Others comment on China’s construction of extensive roads and infrastructure along the Tibetan plateau and the missile capabilities that the Chinese have positioned there. The Indians believe that these missiles can be directed toward only one target—India. A handful of interviewees mentioned concerns related to Chinese control of the Indian rivers, which gives the Chinese the means to deprive India of water or induce flooding with destructive consequences for downstream communities. For example, some Indians blame the Chinese for flash floods in the East Himalayan region in spring 2001 that destroyed villages and killed hundreds.

## Pakistan: The Persistent Irritant

Indians harbor no doubt that India could defeat Pakistan in a conventional military conflict, and hence, Indians view Pakistan as an irritant that has become increasingly destabilizing and dangerous over the past decade, not a serious strategic threat. Many Indians believe Pakistan is pursuing a three-pronged strategy against India. A retired Lt. general summarized the elements of this strategy as described by many.

- **Terrorism (sub-conventional warfare)**—Pakistan is training, equipping, and sending terrorists who come from abroad to infiltrate India not only in Kashmir but in other areas along India’s porous northeast borders through Nepal, and in the northwest through Punjab. These terrorists are setting up cells across India with the intention of exploiting the ethnic divides in India. Indians believe Pakistan’s activities at the sub-conventional level seek to destroy the internal cohesion of the Indian state.
- **Proxy War**—Pakistan is bleeding the life out of the Indian Army with continual cross-border incursions and infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir. The ongoing process of responding to incursions degrades India’s overall military capability by reducing time for training, wasting resources, and undermining morale.
- **Conventional and Nuclear**—A conventional or nuclear strike against India is not expected, but it cannot be ruled out if the Musharraf government seeks an external distraction to divert attention from domestic problems. Moreover, the nuclear capability permits Pakistan to pursue a sub-conventional strategy.

Some interviewees add a fourth dimension to Pakistan’s strategy—leveraging the assistance of other states against India. One acting brigadier described this fourth dimension this way—

*Pakistan has skillfully exploited its position as a frontline state by using other states for its own objectives (e.g., China, United States, and the Muslim countries). Pakistan leverages outside assistance to pursue “existing strategies” that are neither stabilizing, nor sustainable, nor rational for a state with its capability.*

One acting air commodore expressed the frustrations of many Indians when he admitted that Pakistan’s strategy has succeeded. He observed—

*Pakistan’s strategy has hobbled India. For decades, India has been unable to ignore Pakistan. As much as India would like to extend itself beyond South Asia, it cannot.*

A prominent strategic affairs journalist described Pakistan as a “ball and chain around India’s neck.”

Only one Indian interviewee expects to see much change in Pakistan that would lessen the terrorist activity along the line of control (LOC) in Kashmir, despite U.S. efforts to pressure President Musharraf. [9] Nearly all Indian interviewees believe that Islamic extremism and the extant terrorist networks run so deep in Pakistan that Musharraf is incapable of making any significant changes. Furthermore, most Indians assert that even if Musharraf possessed the ability to uproot the extremists, he does not possess the will to do so (see Chapter 3 for detail on Indian views of Pakistan).

## Demographic Threats

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Several retired Indian generals worry about destabilizing external and internal demographic trends—

- **External**—An illegal influx of immigrants from Bangladesh and Nepal could cause social tension, particularly between Muslims and Hindus. Moreover, the Indians worry about elements of the Maoist movement in Nepal taking root in India.
- **Internal**—India’s deprived classes are becoming more educated and politically assertive, which could be destabilizing. If the Indian government cannot successfully manage bringing the under-privileged classes into the mainstream, the situation could turn violent and spin out of the government’s control, with severe implications for the Indian military, which recruits heavily from the deprived classes.

## Maritime Threats

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Indian interviewees identified protecting and securing the sea lanes extending from the Strait of Hormuz to the Strait of Malacca and India’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) as increasingly important priorities. For Indians, ensuring the safe pas-



sage of energy and merchant ships through the Indian Ocean Basin promotes stability across Asia. They articulate two types of concerns in the Indian Ocean. First and foremost, retired military officers (including three admirals) worry about growing piracy and terrorist threats to energy and merchant traffic along the sea lanes of communication (SLOC). Second, all Indian military officers argued that India seeks to prevent the Indian Ocean from becoming an area of turbulence and competition among regional and extra-regional navies, with the prospect of future Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean being particularly worrisome.

## Transnational Threats

Many Indian interviewees worry about narco-trafficking, terrorism, and Islamic fundamentalism that are used by states or non-state actors either separately or in combination to threaten India or destabilize the region generally. Some Indians see these three elements as an integrated threat. For example, in the case of Al Qaeda, narco-trafficking funded its activities; Islamic fundamentalism provided the ideology; and terrorism was its deadly weapon. Indians describe these transnational threats in different ways. The following comments are illustrative of the range of Indian thinking.

Indians are particularly concerned about the link between fundamentalism and terrorism. One retired Lt. general described it in this way—

*Terrorism must be targeted at its fundamentalist roots. "You cannot tame a cobra without removing its venom—otherwise it will kill you." Fighting fundamentalism is a long-term process that requires all levers of power—economic, political, and social strategies.*

Another retired Lt. general characterized international terrorism as Islamic—

*Terrorism comes in many forms—international, sub-regional, and indigenous. The only form of international terrorism is Islamic terrorism. Muslims use Islam to gain international support for their grievances. [10]*

A leading Indian strategist described Islamic fundamentalism as a global problem—

*Ideological forces are not restricted to countries; they are by their very nature transnational. Non-state groups spread their message around the world, creating infrastructure to support their activities and gaining access to financial resources, largely through drug trafficking. Countering these forces requires a coherent strategy.*

(see Chapter 3 for detail on how Indians view the U.S. war on terrorism).



The Indian interviewees identified two types of non-proliferation-related concerns—one concern they share with the Americans and the other concern is directed at the United States. First, Indians share American concerns about the emergence of other nuclear powers in Asia (e.g., Iran, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, and Israel) and about the impact of broader nuclear proliferation on the security environment. Many Indians expressed grave concern about non-state actors or terrorists gaining access to nuclear technology. Second, however, most Indians also consider any non-proliferation policies designed to curb or curtail the development of Indian capabilities, including any attempts to block third parties from selling technologies to India, as inimical to Indian security interests because they impose limits on India's security options (see Chapter 3 for more elaboration on non-proliferation as an area of strategic convergence and divergence).

## The U.S. Role in India's Strategic Environment

Indian interviewees recognized that the United States had sustained strategic interests in their extended security horizon, even before the war on terrorism brought the U.S. military presence to the region. A reluctant acceptance of U.S. power and presence in South Asia emerged in the interviews. Many Indian interviewees, as much as they are uncomfortable with U.S. power, have accepted the United States' "super power status" as reality not only to tolerate but also to embrace and engage toward common goals. Some Indians appear to have come to this realization with great hesitation. But many of the Indian interviewees (policymakers and military officers) see real areas of strategic convergence with the United States and believe that an Indo-U.S. relationship will have a stabilizing effect on the entire region. Indians of this mind see the role of the United States in broad terms. A prominent strategic thinker described this acceptance of the United States in this way—

*India wants to be part of the management of the region and a provider of security. But India needs U.S. power and capabilities to transform and stabilize the region. It can only be achieved in partnership with the United States.*

A highly placed Indian brigadier argued that Indians ideally would like to see the United States play three roles as a strategic partner and actor in South Asia. They expect the United States—

1. to be a stabilizing force in the region,
2. to be a protecting force when shared values and interests may be threatened, and
3. to be an enabling force that assists India in protecting its own national security interests.

In January 2002 as tensions were mounting between India and Pakistan along the LOC, this brigadier observed that—

*Currently, Indians do not see the United States playing a stabilizing role in the region. The U.S. support of Pakistan perpetuates the violence in Kashmir. Pakistan's outside support from the United States and China empowers it to continue its proxy war with India. Every time the United States calls for Pakistan and India to resolve the conflict, it provokes the Pakistanis and undermines the Indians. The Indians feel that they have already offered the Pakistanis all that they can to resolve the conflict.*

A leading Indian strategist envisaged the Indo-U.S. relationship having a wide-reaching impact—

*The Indo-U.S. relationship has the potential to reshape the political/security/economic system in South Asia. It can help foster a climate of democracy and secularism in the region that allows the states to live together peacefully. To achieve this, the United States must help ensure the Indian model—that embodies secularism, democracy, ethnic diversity, political unity, and personal freedoms—prevails in the Indian Ocean Basin.*

An acting brigadier succinctly linked the United States to India's central interests—

*Regional stability is the centerpiece of Indian policy in its extended security horizon. If the United States and India are seen to be working together as friends, it will have a stabilizing effect across the region.*

A retired Lt. general acknowledged the U.S. interests in the region—

*The United States has sustained interests in the regions that comprise India's extended security horizon that the U.S. military will be required to protect. India should seek areas of convergence on these issues and work jointly with the United States to maintain peace and security in the region.*

## American View of the Strategic Environment

For Americans, the Indian Ocean Basin as defined by the Indians does not exist as one discrete region. U.S. military and policymaking organizations divide Asia into discrete theaters or regions (e.g., the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Near East/South Asia, Asia-Pacific) and apply multiple and overlapping analytical policy filters that include India in different contexts and that perceive the threats and opportunities in the region differently, preventing any one coherent view of Asia or the Indian

Ocean Basin and India's role in it from emerging. Instead of viewing the Indian Ocean Basin as a discrete region in Asia, Americans hold the view that it sits on the edge of other regions that demand American attention. One American colonel underscored Americans' different way of thinking about the Indian Ocean with this observation—

*If you see a map of Asia on the wall at the Indian Ministry of Defence, India sits at the center of Asia. The Indians see themselves located at the center of the world. Americans view Asia much more broadly than India with interests spanning from the Middle East to Northeast Asia. For Americans, India has never been thought of as the center of Asia, but it lies on the periphery of regions where the United States has national security interests.*

For Americans, India and the Indian Ocean Basin represent a “strategic cross-roads” at which other discrete regions—the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and East Africa—converge. From a PACOM perspective, the western border of its Asia-Pacific area of responsibility (AOR) divides South Asia and the Indian Ocean down the middle, focusing PACOM's attention on the Strait of Malacca. Moreover, it became clear in the interviews with Americans that the U.S. system is not designed to accommodate India into U.S. strategic planning because India is grouped with different sets of countries in different organizations. For example, India is sometimes grouped with the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Asia Pacific. Many Americans lamented this problem (see Chapter 4 for further discussion on this issue). This comment by a recently retired policymaker was typical—

*It is not clear that the U.S. Government has developed a strategic vision for South Asia. When analysts view South Asia from the Middle East or from Southeast Asia, they see different things. South Asia plays a peripheral role in both regions.*

A South Asia FAO believes that although South Asia now demands the attention of policymakers, the lack of vital U.S. national security interests in South Asia contributes to an operational deficit there. This South Asia FAO argued—

*A number of U.S. interests converge to make India an important player in Asia—a rising China, India's relationship with Russia, counter-terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and increased economic ties. But an operational deficit persists because the U.S. military lacks an enduring vital military interest in South Asia. Most of the interests that we share with India are strategic, not military. For example, sea lane protection is an important issue, but there is no adversary threatening them at this time. Without a “bad guy” South Asia finds little resonance in the U.S. military, except with the people who have a large strategic vision. India was not important to the Joint Staff until after 9/11.*

Another South Asia FAO warned against letting this blindspot in U.S. thinking persist. He observed—



*India could be considered a natural fit with U.S. interests and values, but we [the USG] believe that we do not share vital strategic interests with them. The United States could ignore South Asia in the short-term, but to do so would be at our own peril—as was the case with Afghanistan.*

Few American interviewees even tried to characterize the U.S. view of the strategic environment in Asia. Some interviewees seemed more comfortable talking about their understanding of India's interests than U.S. interests in Asia. Others lamented the fact that the United States does not have a strategic view of Asia. Several policymakers complained that the Bush Administration had not yet answered several fundamental questions—

- What is the American role in the world?
- As the U.S. prosecutes the war on terrorism, what do we want the world to look like?
- What are our objectives? How do we use all levers of power to achieve these objectives?
- What are the opportunities and vulnerabilities that we should be contemplating?

It may be the case that this lack of clarity contributed to the Americans' reluctance to describe U.S. interests in Asia. However, one American admiral provided a succinct and "big picture" characterization of U.S. interests in Asia over the next decade. He believed the U.S. military sought to—

*Deter/dissuade the emergence of a military competition in the region that could emanate from different centers—unification of Korea, China-Taiwan, resurgent Japan, or emergence of India; and provide assurance to friends and allies that the United States can ensure stability in the region to promote collective peace and prosperity, which includes protecting Americans and maintaining an environment for democracy to thrive.*

He noted that a relationship with India would contribute to promoting both of those interests. The United States wants India's economy to grow and India to take on a larger role in promoting regional stability. Similarly to the Indians, many American interviewees believe that an Indo-U.S. strategic relationship will stabilize the region and bolster both countries' efforts to promote regional stability and security.

## U.S. Perceptions of Threats in Asia

American interviewees did not discuss the threats that they see in the region in the same level of detail provided by the Indians. [11] American response to questions about the kind of threats they anticipated in the region over the next decade tended



to be short, with little elaboration, and varied depending on the position of the interviewee. Surprisingly, few interviewees mentioned the war on terrorism as driving their thinking about threats in Asia. One recurring theme emerged—China is the central concern in Asia for the U.S. military. This concern arises out of China’s emergence as a regional power (and potential future competitor) and the attendant uncertainty about China’s long-term military capabilities and ambitions in the region. In particular, Americans seemed most concerned with a potential Chinese-Taiwan conflict that could involve U.S. troops. Most references to China remained vague and referred to China as a regional power, a long-term threat, and potential competitor for influence in Asia. Some Americans were uncomfortable talking about China generally and would emphasize that the Indo-U.S. relationship must not be based on U.S. concerns about China.

Aside from China, Americans consistently defined U.S. concerns in a larger Asian context—

- “Tinderboxes” in Asia—China-Taiwan, the Korean Peninsula, India-Pakistan.
- Renewed and emboldened insurgent groups in Southeast Asia that will destabilize the region.
- Weak global economy—globalization ensures that a weak economy in the United States could create instability in other areas.
- Destabilizing transborder threats—migration, narco-trafficking, cross-border terrorism, piracy.
- Failing states—lack of good governance in key critical countries (e.g., Indonesia and Pakistan) could have cascading destabilizing effects.

Several military officers at PACOM did not see any “near-term” threats in the region, but they were concerned with promoting stability and prosperity in the region.

## The Indian Role in the United States’ Strategic Environment

All American interviewees viewed building a strategic and military relationship with India as a long-term process that will help position the United States for future challenges in Asia. One interviewee called engaging India “an investment in the future.” The reasons cited for building the relationship reflect concerns that the Asian environment could become increasingly hostile and dangerous to U.S. military presence. A strategic and military relationship with India positions the United States for and hedges against unforeseeable or unfavorable developments in the future. Many interviewees developed this theme by emphasizing different aspects of the future problems the

United States might face (e.g., problems with allies, new alliances, concerns about China, and other destabilizing forces); the following observations were typical.

*A relationship with India counters the possibility of an India-China-Russia axis emerging that seeks to counter the United States.*

*India can be seen as a hedge against losing our more significant allies, such as Japan or South Korea.*

*If China emerges as a major power, the United States needs to have friends—preferably friends who share the same values (e.g., democratic). In the future, India will have more clout and weight.*

*India sits in the most strategic location in the world, which could give the United States the ability to quickly access many of the unstable areas in the region.*

*India is important if the U.S. economy does not recover by helping to stabilize the spillover effects that could destabilize Southeast Asia, which is closely tied to the U.S. economy. India is positioned to help manage this problem if it occurs.*

A second recurring theme among Americans is that the United States must build a relationship with India to ensure that India is not working against U.S. interests in the future. In this vein, many Americans advocated that “the low cost of building a relationship today will pay large dividends in the future” by preventing India from acting in ways that could be counter to U.S. interests. The following comments from an American colonel, a South Asia FAO, and a high-level policymaker, respectively, captured those sentiments.

*India can be (and has been) a spoiler or it can be a partner. If India is a partner, it will not always kowtow to the United States—it will pursue its own security interests. But most of the time Indian and U.S. interests will coincide. If India is a spoiler in the region, it could create a lot of problems for the United States. The USG must do the cost-benefit analysis. The costs of building a relationship with India today are significantly lower than the costs of facing India as a spoiler in the future. Moreover, the costs of building a relationship with India will likely increase over time.*

*We [the U.S. military] are beginning to view India as more than just a regional power in Asia. In fact, we see many areas where U.S. and Indian interests coincide. As we move forward with a relationship with the Indians, we must be cognizant of the fact that if the Indians become frustrated, it may drive them to take actions that are counter to U.S. interests (e.g., form alliances that create problems*

*for the United States or proliferate technologies). An unfriendly India would be destabilizing for South Asia.*

*For the United States, it is better to have the Indians on our side than not to have them on our side. If their economy grows, India will be an even more important player in the region, and since the relationship will take a long time to evolve, we should only expect pay-offs for a relationship with India in the long-term. Moreover, we must be realistic—India will contribute to U.S. interests on a case-by-case basis. India probably will never play a decisive role in any U.S. engagement, but it can assist on the margins.*

For Americans, a strategic and military relationship with India is a hedge against an uncertain and possibly threatening future security environment in Asia. If India is a partner, American interviewees argued, the future environment may be less threatening and more easily managed.

## End Notes

7. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Indians worry about how the Chinese will respond to a robust Indo-U.S. relationship.
8. Only three Indian interviewees did not characterize China as a threat or raise concerns about Chinese intentions and potential responses to U.S. actions.
9. A retired Indian Lt. general who has great respect for and confidence in Musharraf offered the only exception to this view. He forged a close relationship with Musharraf when they studied together at Staff College in England, and he believes that Musharraf is sincere about wanting to change Pakistan. He pleads for Indians to be patient because Musharraf needs time to build a constituency in “the middle”—between the extremists and the Pakistani elite. He admits that his views are met with great skepticism in Delhi.
10. After making his comment, the retired Lt. general acknowledged that Indians are highly sensitive about equating terrorism with Islam, given the nation’s large Muslim population.
11. The lack of elaboration on how the U.S. military is thinking about threats in the region can be attributed to several factors. First, interviews with Americans tended to be shorter, particularly with high-level decisionmakers, so the majority of the interview focused on India specifically, not U.S. thinking on Asia. Second, interviewees assumed that the threats in the region either tend to be widely understood or are considered too sensitive to discuss. Third, the Indians tended to focus on these issues more, partly because they sought to use the interview to communicate their interests to an American audience.





# Areas of Strategic Convergence and Divergence

Conventional wisdom prevails in Washington and New Delhi that Americans and Indians are increasingly recognizing that their strategic interests converge in areas that are important to the national security of both countries. In fact, this recognition has, in no small part, contributed to the momentum behind building a strategic and military relationship for the past two years. Some interviewees on both sides would go as far as to say that they do not see any areas where U.S. and Indian interests collide or diverge greatly. The reality, however, as one explores the nuances of each issue, is less clear cut. American and Indian interviewees cited a number of areas where the United States' and India's strategic interests converge, but further probing of these areas suggested that the American and Indian understanding of these areas and issues and the role the United States or India should play differed greatly in some cases. For example, Americans and Indians sometimes identified different areas of strategic convergence or had different understandings of potential impediments to cooperation in specific areas.

This section dissects the perceptions and understanding of areas of strategic convergence and divergence that either recurred frequently in the interviews or that illustrated a critical gap in understanding between Americans and Indians. The areas detailed below represent foundational issues (common values and economic ties), concerns/interests related to specific countries or regions, and functional concerns (e.g., the war on terrorism and non-proliferation). This section by no means should be regarded as a comprehensive list of all areas of potential convergence or divergence; but these issues emerged as the most significant among the interviewee sample in this study. [12]

## Common Democratic Values

Both Indians and Americans claim that democracy is an important rationale for a military relationship, and both extol the virtue of spreading democratic values. That said, "democracy" is anything but a common language for understanding engagement for two reasons. First, Indians doubt that Americans are sincere when they extol the importance of democratic values because U.S. policy frequently fails to

reflect these values, especially, in the Indian view, in the way the Americans treat India and arch rival Pakistan. Second, Indians believe that the appropriate “democratic” model for their region is not the United States, but India itself, which is better attuned to the challenges faced by developing countries.

## What the Americans Say...and What the Indians Believe

Nearly all American interviewees cited shared democratic values and a desire to have a democratic partner on the other side of the globe as the foundation for a closer relationship with India. A policymaker in Washington and a colonel at PACOM, respectively, described the importance of values in ways that capture the sentiments of many others.

*The reasons for a strategic relationship with India are many. As the two largest democracies in the world, we share the same values, which provide a solid foundation for the relationship.*

*In an uncertain environment, the U.S. military needs to have more friends—preferably friends with shared democratic values—in Asia, particularly if China emerges as a major power.*

Indian interviewees are highly skeptical of this rhetoric for the reasons expressed by this high-ranking Indian policymaker—

*Democracy ought to be built into the strategic concept of the relationship. Just saying we [the United States and India] are the two largest democracies is not enough. It must mean something. Being a democracy should confer some kind of natural advantage on India in its relations with the United States. Instead India seems to be at a disadvantage because Americans are uncomfortable dealing with India's cumbersome decisionmaking process. It is easier for the United States to deal with an authoritarian regime like Pakistan's, which can be quickly and comprehensively molded to fit U.S. strategic objectives. If democratic values factor into U.S. thinking about which relations it prefers and which it should avoid, it is not obvious. Does the fact that India is a democracy have any weight in U.S. decisionmaking? Or are all U.S. relationships based only on realpolitik? For us, it isn't clear.*

Indians insist that the Americans' constant harping on the importance of democratic values only engenders cynicism about U.S. motives and could make the relationship acrimonious if the Indians perceive that the United States is pulling its punches on Pakistan, while undervaluing India's deep democratic experience.

## India's Role as a Democratic Model for Asia

Indians believe that as the only democracy in South Asia—and a highly successful “democratic experiment”—they are the appropriate model for developing countries around the Indian Ocean Basin. They have total faith in democracy’s intrinsic strength to “self correct” unstable situations through elections. For example, in the face of domestic unrest, India frequently has called new elections, using democratic processes to ease internal tensions. Indian democracy, many Indians claim, is more appropriate than American democracy in this context because it has proven robust in accommodating India’s vast ethnic and religious diversity. A prominent Indian strategist spoke passionately about India as the region’s democratic role model—

*India's democratic system thrives on its ethnic diversity. For states all over the world, particularly Third World states that are struggling with internal ethnic issues, India provides a model for them. The success of India's democratic experiment will have an impact across South Asia—on the populations of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, West Asia, Africa, and Burma—because India provides both an example for them and influences them through extensive interaction... The intellectuals in these neighboring societies are watching the court decisions and public debates in India. For example, they are watching how India deals with its ethnic issues and the role of the state in the political system... They are not watching the United States or thinking about the U.S. system as a model.*

This theme was echoed by more than half of all Indian interviewees in the sample. In contrast, it is worth noting that not a single American interviewee at any level so much as mentioned either the efficacy of the Indian democratic system as a model for the region or the Indians’ strong advocacy of it.

## Economic Cooperation

Indians and Americans agree on the importance of a strong economic relationship to support and bolster military cooperation. The interviews suggest that broad-based agreement exists that both countries and the Indo-U.S. strategic relationship will benefit from growing economic prosperity in India for the following reasons—

- An economically prosperous India will be a stabilizing force in Asia.
- Only strong economic ties can sustain an enduring strategic relationship and insulate the relationship from political change in either country or future disagreement on strategic issues.
- Strong U.S. investment in India secures a more predictable, long-term American commitment to the Indo-U.S. relationship.



## One American policymaker contrasted India with France—

*The United States and India must “thicken” the relationship to enable it to absorb and sustain the inevitable shocks that will arise as India pursues its national interests. Without a strong economic foundation, the Indians cannot risk being perceived as difficult to deal with. India cannot act like France—one of America’s most defiant partners. France, because of its deep economic ties with the United States, carries political clout that sustains the strategic relationship, even when the French outwardly defy the United States.*

Both sides believe that the economic relationship is the glue that will produce a more enduring relationship. Indians believe that without it, either party can walk away from the relationship unaffected—the Americans have few economic interests in the region, and the Indians are not dependent on the American market.

Beyond agreement on the importance of the economic relationship, Indian and American views diverge on the size and scope of that relationship and what steps must be taken to build it or make it closer.

Many American interviewees commented on the “thinness” of the Indo-U.S. economic relationship. From an American perspective, U.S. trade with India is negligible, equaling about one percent of total U.S. trade. For this reason, American interviewees were adamant that the economic relationship must take off before the Indo-U.S. relationship will have a firm foundation. Many American interviewees were frank in their prognosis—

*With such a negligible amount of trade, no political constituency or interests exist with any power to sway policy.*

In addition to the thin economic relationship, a handful of American interviewees worry that significant economic asymmetries between the two countries will be a recurring source of tension. One highly placed U.S. policymaker expressed concerns that economic issues would continue to be a stumbling block for the relationship.

*In the past, significant economic asymmetries have divided the political leadership in both countries on important international economic issues, such as property rights, WTO negotiations, and climate change. One manifestation of our [U.S. and Indian] disparate economic situations is divergent voting records in international organizations. Past records indicate that the U.S. divergence with India is greater than with any other country. For example, China votes almost twice as often with the United States as India.*

An American colonel, who had spent years in India, shared the view that the poor economic relationship could undermine progress in other areas. He observed—



*India finds itself negotiating from a position of weakness, which fuels Indian suspicions of U.S. motives. This suspicion spills over into all areas of the relationship.*

In contrast, Indians do not characterize the current economic relationship as “thin.” For Indians, the United States is among its largest trading partners, accounting for approximately 25 percent of India’s annual trade. Indian interviewees would like to see an expanded economic relationship for two reasons: First, like the Americans, they believe that increased U.S. economic stakes in India will mitigate the unpredictability of congressional policies aimed at India and could reduce the risk of future sanctions. Second, Indians were frank about their need for foreign investment, particularly U.S. investment, to spur much needed economic growth in India. However, several Indian policymakers observed that despite the importance of the economic component to the overall Indo-U.S. strategic relationship, it has been neglected. One Indian policymaker complained—

*The economic relationship is not receiving the same level of attention as the military relationship. In fact, no mechanisms are in place to build the economic relationship, as we have in other areas of the relationship. The economic side must keep pace and be linked with the other components of the relationship.*

Many Indians believe that the different components of the relationship are directly linked. A common perception prevails that a stronger Indo-U.S. economic relationship will naturally flow from a strategic relationship. When asked directly what India expects to receive for military cooperation, all of the Indian policymakers and most of the military officers rank a broader economic relationship, which includes increased foreign direct investment (FDI) and technology transfer, and science and technology cooperation, as the top priority. Many of the Indian interviewees refer to the United States opening of China as a historical analogue that is shaping their expectations. One Indian strategist explained why Indians hold this belief—

*Indians look to the U.S. relationship with China in 1973 as an indication of what to expect when an Indo-U.S. strategic relationship is established because it symbolized a similar strategic opening. After President Nixon opened China by establishing a strategic relationship, U.S. investment began to flow into China and has not ceased since. Many Indians expect a similar type of economic response toward India since India’s economy is much more advanced compared to the state of the Chinese economy in 1973.*

This thinking suggests that Indians believe that their lackluster ability to attract FDI will change if India is seen to be “strategically opened” by the United States.

Other Indians believe that the United States will invest in India because it serves U.S. interests. On a strategic level, investment in India promotes stability in South Asia broadly. On an economic level, Indians believe that new changes in Indian regulations that open the Indian defense industrial base (DIB) to foreign investment,

by allowing 26 percent foreign ownership, should attract U.S. defense companies to invest in India. Many Indians see this regulatory change as an enormous opportunity for American companies.

An underlying message emerges from all of the Indian interviewees: India is opening to the world, and it presents an opportunity for the United States to seize or to lose. One Indian admiral captured this sentiment—

*As the Indian economy grows over the long-term, India will be a great economic opportunity and a force for stability in the region. Can the United States and India take this relationship forward? If the United States does not seize the opportunities, it may lose them. The world will not remain static. The United States has more to lose if the Indo-U.S. military cooperation fails to develop into a long-term relationship.*

American views diverge sharply from those of the Indians on the relationship between military cooperation and robust economic ties and on what factors will drive an economic relationship. In contrast to the Indians, no American suggested that military cooperation would or could open the floodgates of U.S. foreign investment. No American compared the dynamic of the Indo-U.S. relationship with the opening of China in 1973. Across the board, Americans expressed a similar view on the economic relationship: they squarely place the responsibility for attracting FDI and building the economic relationship on the Indians. They must create the environment that will attract U.S. business. An American admiral captured sentiments held widely among the Americans.

*To play a role as a stabilizer in the region, India needs to reform its economy and create an environment that will facilitate economic growth. They eschewed foreign investment for many years. Today in order to encourage foreign investors, they must create a stable platform for investors. Nothing more or less will attract U.S. business.*

A policymaker in Washington had the impression that Indians did not understand the importance of the economic dimension of the relationship. In January 2002, he opined that Indian actions sent the message that economic ties with the United States were not a priority. [13] For example, he explained—

*Among all of the high-level visits in late 2001, the Indian Finance Minister had not made a trip to Washington as of January 2002, suggesting to American policymakers that economic relationship was not a priority. Moreover, this view was reinforced during a recent visit by National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra, when he backed out of an appointment with the U.S. Secretary of Treasury Paul O'Neill that could only be scheduled at 7:30 a.m. [14] Mishra's behavior left the impression that the economic discussions were not important enough to get him up that early in the morning.*

Finally, these two impressions are supported and reinforced by a widely held American view that it is difficult to do business in India. Many American interviewees warned that the U.S. business community harbors deep concerns about investing in India. The disappointments and frustrations associated with doing business in India cut across most sectors but are particularly strong in the energy sector. One American policymaker referred to Enron as a “huge corpse” that fell victim to the Indian bureaucracy and regulatory system, even before Enron filed for bankruptcy. Another high-ranking American policymaker argued that the lessons learned by U.S. corporations in India have been consistent and are well known—

*Doing business in India is difficult and costly. The Indians are difficult to negotiate with; they sue; they don't pay; and the legal process is slow.*

In the opinion of many American interviewees, these widely held perceptions leave little hope for a new wave of investment in the future. The high-visibility cases of Enron and Chrysler pulling out of India due to bureaucratic, legal, and regulatory problems have damaged India's image in the U.S. business community. The few companies that have succeeded in India receive little media coverage, so their positive experiences had not changed the widely held negative perceptions. One policymaker pointed out that of the 22 U.S. companies that accompanied President Clinton on his trip to India in April 2000, only one company (as of January 2002) had actually invested in India. [15]

## Pakistan

Indian and American interviewees agreed that the complex dynamics characterizing the Indo-Pakistan and U.S.-Pakistan relationships create a minefield of issues that potentially could stall or undermine progress in the Indo-U.S. military relationship. “Pakistan,” in the view of a key DoD planner, “will make or break the Indo-U.S. relationship.”

### Converging Views of Pakistan's Future

One strong area of convergence emerged from the interviews: The United States and India both seek—

- An economically viable and politically stable Pakistan
- The removal of all extremist elements in Pakistan and an end to cross-border terrorism
- Establishment of democratic institutions in Pakistan.



Both Indian and American interviewees emphasized that these three objectives are essential to achieving stability in South and Central Asia, and they fear a collapsing or unstable Pakistan would pose serious security risks for the region (e.g., cascading instability, increased threat from Islamic fundamentalists, and unsecured nuclear weapons).

## Diverging Views of the U.S. Role

American and Indian perceptions diverge fundamentally on the nature or extent of U.S. involvement in the Indo-Pakistan conflict. Over half of the American interviewees believe that the United States must play a stabilizing role in the region. And they argue that if the Indo-Pakistan conflict—by which most Indians mean settling the dispute over Kashmir—is left unmanaged, it will eventually end in a nuclear conflict. Americans have little confidence in India's ability to control escalation to a nuclear exchange if a conflict were to erupt and fear that the two countries will miscalculate the other's intentions. One American asserted that it is difficult to write a scenario that does not spin out of control.

Solving the Kashmir issue, according to a high ranking American policymaker,

*...is the "Holy Grail of Eurasia." If Kashmir is resolved, the strategic picture for all actors in the region will be transformed. If Kashmir remains unresolved, each time the crisis erupts the United States will have to choose sides. It will have to decide which side it seeks to alienate at that point in time. If Kashmir is not put on a path toward resolution, the United States and India will spend most of their time putting out fires, distracting them from the larger strategic relationship.*

According to another leading American policymaker—

*If there is ever to be a resolution [to the Kashmir conflict], the U.S. will have to play a role in supporting both India and Pakistan. This would empower India to be conciliatory, and it would give Pakistan the confidence to accept a deal.*

A leading American military strategist sees the U.S. role as making the conflict less prone to spin out of control by "slowing the pace of nuclear build-up and making nuclear capabilities in the region safer."

This theme—that the Indo-Pakistan problem can be solved only with U.S. assistance and active participation, even if U.S. actions are behind the scenes—recurred often in the interviews with Americans. Many Americans believe that the United States has a special role to play in resolving this historic conflict. Only one American, a senior national security planner, sounded a note of caution—

*The United States doesn't know enough about the history and dynamics on both sides of the Kashmir conflict to play a constructive role as a mediator. The Indians don't want the United States involved, and we cannot push them to make concessions in fighting terrorism. Moreover, the U.S. Government doesn't have a well thought out strategy for playing a mediating role. America should step back and think twice about assuming that this is the right moment for U.S. intervention. Right now, we have no strategy for success.*

All Indian interviewees would agree emphatically with this assessment and disagree with those American interviewees—i.e., most of the sample—who believe the United States has a role to play. In contrast, most Indian interviewees rejected any role for the United States as a peacemaker/mediator between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute. For Indians, Kashmir is strictly a bilateral issue between them and the Pakistanis. A senior Indian policymaker summarized the views of many—

*The Indian psyche will not respond kindly to U.S. pressure to solve Kashmir. Any attempt to exert external pressure or mediation will be rejected. The Indian public will not tolerate being pushed from outside, and the political leadership will resist any attempt by the U.S. to intervene.*

Indians stress that the U.S. role in the Indo-Pakistan conflict should be confined to putting extreme pressure on Pakistan, with a view toward changing the character of the Pakistani state—e.g., to make it democratic, economically viable, and terrorist free—although they doubt that Pakistan will change, even if Kashmir is solved.

In a follow-up interview in June 2002, when asked about the Indians' willingness to accept the United States as a facilitator, an Indian brigadier explained the Indians had decided—

*...to give" the United States space to change Pakistan's behavior" and disabuse Pakistanis of the logic that their nuclear capability provides them cover to continue its infiltration tactics. In the Indian view, Pakistan is responsible for the destabilizing activities in the region. If the U.S. can stop this behavior, then tensions will cease. If not, then the Indians will have to take matters into their own hands because it is untenable to continue along the current unstable path. [16]*

In this context, the Indians view the American role as a facilitator in changing Pakistani behavior. They will likely accept this role only if it benefits Indian interests.

Indians hold equally strong views on America's efforts to "balance" its relations with India and Pakistan. According to two senior Indian policymakers—

*The Indians worry about the U.S. tendency to balance the two relationships in South Asia. India and Pakistan cannot be compared on any level because India is superior in all areas—and has more to offer the United States. How will the*

*United States try to balance an inherently unbalanced equation? Such a position can only imply that the United States is underestimating the importance of India.*

*Most Indians can understand the U.S. requirement to use Pakistan [in campaign against the Taliban]. But the “Indian psyche” cannot tolerate the equation of Pakistan and India in U.S. policy. This implies that the United States equates a thriving democracy with an authoritarian regime. Indians will not accept this.*

Before the attacks on 9/11, most Indian interviewees believed that the United States was moving aggressively to “dehyphenate” the traditional American view of South Asia as an ongoing Indo-Pakistani conflict. They observed that this process of dehyphenation was made easier because, at the time, the Indo-U.S. relationship was on an upward trajectory, while the U.S.-Pakistan relationship was on a downward trajectory. Many Indians commented that before 9/11, the Americans, after many years, appeared to have grasped that Pakistan constitutes one set of strategic issues, while India constitutes a different set. Of course these two sets overlap, but Indians insist that U.S. policy should not be based on balancing India and Pakistan. India’s strategic value in the unfolding Asian landscape is far greater than its conflict with Pakistan; and the Indians believe it is essential for the United States to understand this, just as it is essential for Americans to understand that Pakistan is the problem, not a solution to these new strategic realities. One Indian brigadier succinctly summarized these sentiments—

*If American policymakers view India in a “South Asia” box, balancing India with Pakistan is natural and inevitable. Alternatively, if American policymakers view India in an Asian context, balancing India with Pakistan is not only irrelevant but also detrimental to larger U.S. strategic interests.*

After 9/11, according to the Indian interviewees, Washington reversed itself in the de-hyphenation process and again embraced selective “balance” in its relations with India and Pakistan. This was most evident to Indian and American interviewees with respect to technology issues. A high-ranking U.S. policymaker observed that since the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament on December 13, 2001, “the United States is sitting on the hyphen between Pakistan and India, trying to jawbone both sides.” He explained that with the Indian and Pakistani militaries mobilized on the LOC—

*The technology licensing process has slowed. With the Indian and Pakistani militaries at the brink of war, the U.S. State Department is hesitant to approve anything that could destabilize the situation further. The Administration has also asked the French, Israeli, and Russian governments to slow down their arms sales to India for the same reason. The Indians and Americans signed the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in January, which in theory should facilitate the licensing process, but in reality each sale will be scrutinized carefully.*



He continued that “the Indians seem to be relatively calm and understanding about this situation because they do not want to endanger the sales that are in process.”

But the Indian interviewees were anything but calm and understanding in New Delhi. Many claimed that the United States has slowed down its technology transfer initiatives with India so as not to antagonize the Pakistanis, who are aiding the United States in its war in Afghanistan. They accuse the United States of treating India and Pakistan in “zero-sum” terms, as described by a high-ranking Indian policymaker—

*Americans complain that we [Indians] view the United States relationship with India and Pakistan as a zero sum game, but in reality we see the United States treating the relationship in this manner. We track how the USG is balancing its interaction on both sides. The obsession with Pakistan is on the American side, not the Indian side. We will be watching how we are treated by the U.S. bureaucracy. In theory, India should be treated the same as Israel. But the mentality and habits of the State Department bureaucracy have not changed. All approvals will be slow.*

The Defense Attaché Office (DAO) in the U.S. Embassy in Delhi complained about inexplicable delays for even the most benign items. The American military attachés find themselves in the position of trying to explain the discrepancy between U.S. rhetoric and U.S. actions. For example, in March 2002 Indians were most vocal about the lack of movement for the release of spare parts for the Sea King rescue helicopter. An American colonel admitted that he could not adequately explain why a review process that should not exceed 90 days had taken over 4 months—the Indians submitted the initial paperwork in November 2001. The same colonel warned that mixed signals emanating from Washington could undermine the relationship. He knows that the Indians are watching actions, not listening to rhetoric.

In part, the “mixed signals” reflect the distance between Washington and PACOM, which is responsible for day-to-day implementation of the military relationship with India. Military personnel at PACOM were even less aware that Washington was again fixated on the India-Pakistan conflict, and virtually all interviewees in Hawaii argued that from their standpoint, the hyphen had been removed. This comment from a military planner at PACOM is typical—

*The Indians understand that the U.S. relationship with Pakistan is tactical and the U.S. relationship with India is strategic. Admiral Blair has stressed the U.S. interest in building a long-term relationship with India, emphasizing that the United States does not intend to look at India and Pakistan in a zero-sum context. The United States will not balance its policy between the two states but treat them with their own merits.*

In sum, the interviews suggest that Washington is at best sending mixed signals to the Indians—or at least they are receiving mixed signals—through different U.S. commands that are working from different sets of assumptions.

## China

### Shared Concerns About China

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American and Indian military officers recognize China as an emerging power regionally and globally, and most interviewees share a belief that China represents the most significant threat to both countries' security in the future as an economic and military competitor to both. On the basis of the interviews, it appears that the U.S. and Indian militaries are asking the same questions about China's intentions and future capabilities.

- What kind of growth trajectory will China follow in the future?
- What are China's future strategic and military intentions?
- How is the Chinese military thinking about the post-9/11 strategic environment?
- What capabilities is China building and how will it use them?
- What are the long-term implications if the "China experiment" fails?

A retired Indian Lt. general expressed sentiments shared by many other Americans and Indians.

*The United States and India are watching China's rise carefully. The rise of China, if not managed well, could cause great discomfort to the United States. The United States and India do not want a conflict with China, but tensions could arise as China looks to play a role in the region. Consequently, India and the United States have a common interest as they consider China and its direction in the future.*

But this is not a uniform view. For example, a recently retired Indian admiral claimed that he is not worried about China in the next 10 years because he believes that the Chinese will be incapable of extending their influence beyond the Strait of Malacca into the Indian Ocean before then. In the same vein, several American interviewees questioned the prudence of painting China as a threat. [17]

### India as a Counterweight to China?

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No American or Indian interviewee argued for or recommended that the Indo-U.S. military relationship be directed primarily against China. Neither did any interviewees assert that China was the driving rationale for the relationship, despite sharing a concern for China's emergence as a powerful competitor. Many U.S. military officers acknowledged that China played a central role in their thinking about India, but they emphasized

that China is not the only reason to engage India. However, most Americans argued that China and India cannot be separated in U.S. thinking. This statement is typical—

*As the U.S. military engages India, as much as we say we do, we cannot separate our thinking on India from our thinking on China. We want a friend in 2020 that will be capable of assisting the U.S. military to deal with a Chinese threat. We cannot deny that India will create a countervailing force to China.*

An American major general contrasted the Indo-U.S. relationship with the Sino-U.S. relationship.

*We [Americans and Indians] are both worried about Chinese ambitions in the region, but China is not the sole reason for a relationship. The U.S. policy to engage India is unlike the United States reaching out to China in the 1970s. At that time our relationship with China was solely based on a desire to counter the USSR. When the USSR collapsed, the strategic rationale for the relationship with China evaporated and the relationship deteriorated after the Tiananmen Square massacre. The Indo-U.S. relationship must be multi-faceted, mature, and sustained by a range of shared interests—not only a shared concern for China.*

A U.S. admiral reasoned that a positive relationship with India was a “hedge” against China’s future ambitions—

*The United States and India both view China as a strategic threat and share an interest in understanding China’s strategic intent, though we do not discuss this publicly. India’s suspicions of China drive most of its nuclear strategy and weapon acquisitions. A positive relationship with India offers a hedge against China’s potential ambitions in Northeast and Southeast Asia, and in the Persian Gulf. But a relationship with India will also contribute to other U.S. interests, such as promoting regional stability.*

One American colonel noted a number of downside risks in portraying India as a counter or balance to China in U.S. strategy—

*The United States would be mistaken to portray the Indo-U.S. relationship as a counterweight to China. It will anger the Chinese and could lead to false expectations on the Indian side. They will expect the United States to provide more than it can offer. Moreover, such a rationale for the relationship will make the task of selling the Indo-U.S. relationship to the Indian public exceedingly difficult.*

Indians couch the Indo-U.S. relationship in similar terms by acknowledging the shared concern with China, but they warn that the Indo-U.S. relationship cannot be directed against China. But Indians hold a wide range of views on exactly how China factors into the Indo-U.S. relationship, ranging from acknowledging that discussions



will be ongoing and discrete to loud proclamations that India will never be a pawn in a Sino-U.S. competition. The following comments illustrate the wide range of views in Indian thinking. From a retired Indian Lt. general—

*India and the United States have a commonality of interests as they consider China and its direction in the future. But this does not mean that the Indian government will enter into a formal relationship with the United States to deal with China. Both sides must go out of their way to avoid taking actions together that might provoke China. Indo-U.S. cooperation should be necessarily discreet.*

Another retired Indian Lt. general articulated a view taken by many who see India's concerns with China as different from U.S. concerns with China—

*Indians are not prepared to become a pawn in the U.S. competition with China over the next decade. Moreover, India wants to fight its own battles with China. In this regard, the Indo-U.S. relationship will be useful if the Americans are willing to provide U.S. technical know-how to help build an Indian military capable of defeating China.*

An Indian Navy commander expressed concerns about what being a counter-weight to China implies about the longevity of an Indo-U.S. strategic relationship—

*China views the United States and India as its strategic competitors. India cannot compete, but it has aspirations. The Indians do not want to be perceived as a counter-weight to China because this gives the impression of a transient relationship with the United States that will dissipate when the balance is achieved. Indians observe that the U.S. strategic relationship with China to balance the Soviet Union failed to endure.*

Both militaries conveyed the same bottom line for the Indo-U.S. relationship: A viable, long-term Indo-U.S. relationship cannot be based on countering any third country, especially China.

## Different Views of the Chinese Threat

Indian interviewees focused mostly on the short-term nature of the Chinese challenge, while the Americans focused on the long-term character of the emerging Chinese strategic threat.

Indian interviewees often prefaced their comments on China by stating that Americans must remember that India shares a 4000 km-long border with China, most of which remains disputed. Most Indians consider the Chinese threat to be more immediate, more direct, and perhaps more multifaceted than their American counterparts, who are more concerned about China's gaining capabilities and influ-

ence to threaten the U.S. position in Asia in the future. For Indians, China poses real problems and challenges today, including—

- Unresolved border disputes and the ongoing Chinese occupation of Indian territory
- Nuclear competition and threats (e.g., Chinese nuclear capabilities stationed in Tibet)
- Chinese technical assistance supporting Pakistan's nuclear and ballistic missile programs
- Economic competition for world markets and foreign investment
- China's strategic relationships that "encircle" India (e.g., Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, Kazakhstan)
- China's potential response to U.S. presence in Asia after 9/11.

On this last point, Indian interviewees were particularly anxious about how the Chinese might respond to the American presence in Asia in the post-9/11 world. Many Indian interviewees noted that the Chinese will feel "encircled by the Americans," and they anticipate that the Chinese response to the American presence in Central Asia will come in areas that pose direct challenges to India's security, for example, in Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Persian Gulf. A retired Indian Lt. general described widely felt Indian concerns about U.S. encirclement of China—

*After many years of the United States' soft policy or non-existent policy toward China, the Bush Administration has hardened the U.S. position toward China and is setting the stage for a strategic competition in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States may not be following a policy of containment of China, but from a Chinese and Indian perspective, U.S. actions form a coherent policy of encirclement. This U.S. policy consists of many components: a security relationship with Japan supported by theater missile defense, military and political support for Taiwan, a strategic alliance with Australia, increased participation in ASEAN, military presence in the Philippines, engagement with Vietnam, an emerging military relationship with India, and an improved relationship with Russia. In this context, the U.S. presence in Central Asia completes the U.S. circle around China and positions it close to China's troublesome Xinjiang province.*

A retired Indian brigadier offered—

*Now that the U.S. military has troops stationed in Central Asia, it has cut off China's only clear access to build its economic and political influence. In response, China will up the ante in regions where the U.S. has little influence, such as Myanmar.*

One Indian commander suggested that the Chinese might become more active in areas along India's periphery, such as the Maldives and East Timor, which are relatively new to Chinese influence.

Indian interviewees generally believe that China will respond to the enhanced Indo-U.S. relationship after 9/11 in ways that will affect India's security interests directly. An air commodore expressed this feeling of vulnerability—

*As the United States and India develop a closer military relationship, China will respond. Where or how China will respond remains unclear, but India faces the reality that it lives in a neighborhood where China supplies nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan, weapons to Bangladesh, and is building a 12,000-foot runway near Mandalay, Myanmar, and a deep-water port in Gwadar, Pakistan.*

In contrast to the Indians' worries about the more immediate response from the Chinese, the American interviewees are focused on the longer term implications of the Chinese gaining a strategic position to threaten the U.S. position in Asia. In this context, the American military officers are interested in India as a partner for the long-term strategic competition, including, in the words of an American general, as "a promising countervailing force to China," but the views of this group were complex and nuanced. They believe that the U.S. military must build a network of stable relationships that will give U.S. access in Asia to address all threats, not just the China threat. Many American interviewees see the Indo-U.S. relationship largely in the context of the stability and durability of other U.S. relationships in the region. If America's relationships with its traditional allies—Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia—become more fragile, India will emerge as a critical component of U.S. strategy. One South Asia FAO expressed this widely held view—

*The U.S. relationship with India is a "hedge" against losing our traditionally significant allies in the region, such as Japan or South Korea.*

Virtually all Indians wondered how India factors into U.S. thinking about China, suggesting that U.S. efforts to energize the new relationship with India have not addressed this issue in any comprehensive way, if at all. Indian concerns were mixed and often contradictory. Several Indians believe that if a Cold War between the United States and China emerged, India would have to take sides, which would lead to an internal debate in India about which side would better serve Indian interests. A retired air commodore observed that voices on the left of India's political spectrum would argue that India's interests would be better served by siding with China. Others believe that India will naturally be the net beneficiary of rising tensions between the U.S. and China. A retired Indian brigadier represented this view—

*As China moves in new directions to respond to the new U.S. position in Asia, an open competition will become more apparent. The United States will up the ante,*



*which will then provoke another Chinese response. This will visibly increase friction between the two states and undermine engagement efforts. India will be the net beneficiary of increased friction between the United States and China, particularly if U.S. investors are looking for new opportunities for investment.*

Yet others believe that when tensions arise in the Indo-U.S. relationship, as is bound to happen, the United States could seek a closer strategic partnership with China, similar to the relationship pursued by the Clinton Administration, leaving India in the cold.

An unexpressed fear lurked beneath the surface of most interviews with Indians: that the United States is a fickle and uncertain strategic partner, that it has not made a solid strategic choice to partner with India, and that it might change partners in Asia to India's detriment, as political administrations change.

## The Indian Ocean—Potential Area of Cooperation

Despite the different perceptions of the Chinese threat and how China fits into the Indo-U.S. relationship, a number of Indians identified one area where they think American and Indian interests converge: keeping China out of the Indian Ocean region. Indians envisage Indo-U.S. cooperation in the Indian Ocean Basin as being multifaceted and naval in focus. Therefore, Indians believe that quietly discussing a shared concern of China's presence in the Indian Ocean serves both countries and will not raise political sensitivities among India's political elite associated with China. Comments from an acting Indian brigadier and a retired Indian Lt. general reflected these sentiments—

*The Indian Ocean Basin is the area of opportunity for cooperation in all areas: promoting trade, countering China, protecting sea lanes, and ensuring regional stability. Focusing on the Indian Ocean Basin also helps detach the Indo-U.S. relationship from the Indo-Pakistan conflict and will allow the United States and India to take actions to keep China out of the region, while not raising any political sensitivities among the Indian elite about India being a pawn of the United States.*

*The Indian Ocean Basin is extremely important to India. India seeks to prevent this region from becoming an area of turbulence and competition among the navies of the region. India wants to keep China out of the Indian Ocean. This means that the Indian Navy must be strengthened. It must bolster its bases in the region, including the Eastern Command on the Nicobar Islands. It must work with other navies, particularly the U.S. Navy, to protect the sea lanes and enhance all maritime security in India's EEZ.*

## India's Relationship with Russia

### Cold War Residue Shapes Indian Perceptions and Concerns

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The interviews uncovered a significant misperception related to India's relationship with Russia: many Indian interviewees worry that the United States may attempt to limit India's relationship with Russia.

Residue from the Cold War appears to strongly influence Indian perceptions about how Americans are thinking about the Indo-Russian relationship. For Indians, Russia represents two critical elements in Indian strategic thinking: India's "most dependable strategic partner"—which includes being a reliable weapons supplier—and its most valuable "strategic option." Many Indian interviewees at all levels commented on Russia's importance and dependability as a strategic partner. A retired Lt. general who is influential in policymaking circles explained this persistent theme among Indian interviewees.

*India became friendly with the Soviet Union in the early 1970s at a time when their strategic interests vis-à-vis China converged. Indo-U.S. interests did not match, so India chose to develop a relationship with the Soviet Union to create a strategic balance in India's favor. Since then, no points of discord have emerged. Still today, their [India and Russia] interests coincide in Central Asia, West Asia, and vis-à-vis Pakistan, although less so vis-à-vis China. Russia has been a dependable ally at a broad strategic level and as a defense supplier. Looking to the future, I see few areas of discord with Russia.*

Many Indians (mostly retired military officers) argued that if they had to choose tomorrow between the United States and Russia they would opt for Russia. Russia supplies 70 percent of India's military equipment and joint-development agreements; whereas the Indian military distrust the United States as a reliable supplier. Nevertheless, over the medium- and long-term, the Indian military seeks to reduce its dependence on Russia by diversifying defense suppliers, particularly since Russia no longer offers the special ruble-rupee deals that India enjoyed during the Soviet era.

In addition, the majority of Indian interviewees spoke of Russia as India's most valuable strategic option that cannot be compromised or sacrificed under any circumstances. But they feel that their relationship with Russia is most at risk as they move forward with the Americans. Many retired Indian military officers worry that the United States will ask the Indians to choose sides or the United States will interfere in the Indo-Russian relationship. In response to these concerns, the Indians send the message that India would likely choose a relationship with Russia over the United States. One recently retired Indian admiral captured the essence of this widely held view among the Indian military.

*I see few areas of strategic divergence between India and the United States. However, India will never give up its relationship with Russia. If the United States disproves of this relationship, it will likely disrupt the Indo-U.S. relationship.*

These concerns presumably grow out of India's Cold War experience, during which its relationship with the Soviet Union represented one of the most immutable obstacles in the Indo-U.S. relationship. In addition, this view also appears to stem from India's sensitivities about its sovereignty and freedom of action. Over half the Indian interviewees explained that India treats its relationship with Russia and the United States (as well as other states) as "mutually exclusive" and warned against U.S. interference in its other relationships.

The Indian view appears to be so shaped by the Cold War experience that it reflects little understanding that U.S. and Russian relations have changed fundamentally in the new strategic environment. Many Indians continue to be wary of a U.S.-Russia competition. For example, many Indian interviewees worry that U.S. presence in Central Asia could increase tension between the United States in Russia. One highly placed Indian policymaker raised concerns that are shared by many Indians about Russia's response to U.S. actions in the war on terrorism.

*Long-term U.S. military presence in Central Asia may bring many benefits such as maintaining stability, promoting democracy, and increasing trade, but Indians worry about Russian and Chinese attitudes toward this presence. Currently, the Russians and Chinese seem to be cooperating, but how long will this cooperation last? When it ends, how will it affect India. . . . The situation has deteriorated in Chechnya. Will Georgia become destabilized with U.S. and Russian troops on the ground? Will the U.S. military presence in Georgia antagonize Russia?*

Several Indian military officers emphasized how the post-Cold War environment had fundamentally changed India's view of its defense supply relationship with Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia—in need of hard currency—abandoned the special ruble-rupee deals that the Indians had enjoyed for decades; Russia demanded hard currency for all military sales. In the words of a highly placed Indian brigadier, "India was set free—no longer captured by the special arrangements with the Soviets." The same brigadier observed—

*The Russians helped India through a difficult time in the 1970s and 1980s, and the result of this close relationship is that India buys 70 percent of its military equipment from Russia. However, in the new environment in which no special arrangement with Russia exists, we [the Indians] can begin to diversify our suppliers. We can buy from anyone and everyone. If the Russians cannot produce what we need, we will buy from suppliers who can meet our requirements. But it will take time to restore a balance in our military procurement portfolio, and until then our relationship with Russia will remain extremely important.*



In contrast to Indian concerns, no American interviewee mentioned the Indo-Russian relationship as a potential obstacle to the Indo-U.S. relationship. Nor did they indicate that the U.S. military had any interest in interfering with or placing any kinds of conditions on the Indo-Russian relationship, which suggests a lack of Cold War residue on the American side.

Many American interviewees, however, concede that the Indo-Russian relationship continues to be a source of some U.S. suspicion toward India, which could slow the development of the Indo-U.S. relationship, particularly regarding technology transfer. Some U.S. policymakers worry about transferring technology to India because of the potential “technology leakage” to Russia. One American colonel who has played a central role in pushing through India’s technology transfer requests explained the problem succinctly—

*The United States will remain reluctant to transfer any military technology to India if U.S. policymakers believe Russian scientists and technicians might have access to it.*

The Indo-Russian relationship may impede the transfer of technology to India, but the United States is not requesting that the Indians change their Indo-Russian relationship.

## Central Asia

Central Asia represented the largest gap in perceptions between the American and Indian interviewees. With India’s deep historic links to Central Asia—Mogul culture arose from Central Asia—its strategic interest in this region would seem to be self-evident. In fact, all but a few of the Indian interviewees cited Central Asia not only as a chief strategic concern but also as a promising area of cooperation and coordination with the Americans. For Indians, Central Asia touches most of their strategic hot buttons—

- Terrorism
- Encirclement by China
- Energy exploration and transport
- Relations with Russia and Iran
- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)
- Drug smuggling.

Indians believe that their long-term support for the Afghan Northern Alliance positions the Indian government to play a formative role in Afghanistan. India is already

providing aid and training to the Afghans. For example, one Indian interviewee explained that the Indian MEA was providing a 3-week diplomatic and English language training course for 30 Afghan Foreign Service officers at his research facility. For Indian strategists, Central Asia is a region they know well and where many of their strategic interests intersect and converge with U.S. interests. Moreover, many Indians believe that cooperation between the United States and India will have a stabilizing effect on the region. A retired Lt. general expressed the sentiments of many Indian interviewees when he described Central Asia as fertile ground for cooperation—

*India has an interest in ensuring stability returns to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Of course, we [the Indians] have one eye on Pakistan as we reach out to Afghanistan and Central Asia, but India and the United States could operate side-by-side across the board in Afghanistan, including joint peacekeeping operations under the UN; assistance in the establishment of political institutions, police forces, and a national military; and joint development projects.*

An air commodore reinforced this view and expressed the widely held view that India seeks to play a larger role in Central Asia—

*In Afghanistan, India will be playing a role in training Afghan police officers, military officers, and diplomats. Indians seek to play a larger role in Central Asia where we have long historical relationships. The Indo-U.S. cooperation in Central Asia will help to stabilize these regions.*

A prominent strategic affairs journalist sees larger strategic benefits flowing from Indo-U.S. cooperation in Central Asia. He believes that an Indo-U.S. partnership may make U.S. military presence in the region more palatable to external powers (e.g., Russia and Iran) with which India enjoys close relationships.

*The Central Asian regimes want stability. India and the United States can work together to bring stability in the region. Since India has close ties with Russia and Iran, Indian presence and activities in Central Asia might not be seen as threatening as U.S. activities there.*

An Indian general described India's long ties to Afghanistan and the possible role for the Indian military—

*India has historical ties and long friendly relations with Afghanistan. In fact, the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan sought to accede to India during Partition, but based on the Principle of Contiguosness, their request was denied. Nevertheless, India has maintained close people-to-people and government-to-government relations (except with the Taliban) ever since. Before the first coup, the Indian military trained Afghan soldiers. Today, India wants a secure and stable Afghanistan that no longer acts as a haven for militants that support Pakistani incursions in*

*Kashmir. . . . The Indian military can contribute to stability by resuming its training of Afghan soldiers, providing non-lethal and low-end military equipment, and supporting NGO-sponsored de-mining operations.*

In contrast, only five American interviewees cited Central Asia (and Afghanistan) as an important area of Indo-U.S. military cooperation. Two American interviewees—a policymaker and a colonel who has spent time in India—mentioned India’s potential contribution due to its historical and cultural ties and identified shared interests in the region. One major general focused on the energy dynamics in the region, asserting that India and the United States shared an interest in freeing the Central Asian republics from their dependence on Russia by opening market opportunities for their energy resources and commerce to the south.

This significant blind spot for the Americans may be explained in several ways. First, few Americans understand the historical connections between India and Central Asia, which are seen as separate and distinct regions. Second, policy offices in DoD and the services are organized to reinforce these “regional” distinctions. In this sense, the unified commands’ AORs may constrain rather than facilitate cooperation with India in this area because Central Asia and India fall in AORs of different unified commands. No interviewees at PACOM identified Central Asia as an area of potential cooperation. Third, India has been outside of U.S. strategic thinking about Asia for so long that policymakers do not routinely think about it. A high-level military officer at PACOM, who was involved in the discussions in the mid-1990s about which command, this is either, CENTCOM or the U.S. European Command (EUCOM), should take responsibility for the new Central Asian states, confessed that he did not recall any mention of India as a player in Central Asia during the decisionmaking process. He found the suggestion that the Indians may see Central Asia as an area of potential strategic cooperation with the United States to be “intriguing.” [18]

## Persian Gulf

A large gap also separates Indian and American views of the Persian Gulf and how it could factor into the Indo-U.S. military relationship. All Indians pointed to the Persian Gulf as a central strategic concern for three reasons—

1. a significant energy relationship—India imports 60 percent of its oil from the Gulf;
2. the human link—Indians constitute the largest minority in the Persian Gulf—many oil fields are manned and managed by Indians—which sends significant remittances to India annually; and
3. an internal political imperative—India must reach out to the Muslim world to assuage its 140 million-strong Muslim population.



Indian interviewees cited five key security interests that hinge on or include the Gulf in important ways—

- Energy security
- Regional stability
- Future of the Islamic world
- WMD proliferation
- Counter-terrorism.

In contrast, fewer than a quarter of the American interviewees—all but two of them were located in Washington—mentioned India's strategic concerns in and close connection with the Persian Gulf; even fewer identified the Persian Gulf as an area where U.S. and Indian interests might converge strongly. Few interviewees at PACOM mentioned the Persian Gulf in any context, suggesting that their thinking about India tends to be heavily conditioned by the shape of existing command AORs.

One American worried that an attack on Iraq or Iran might have a negative effect on the Indo-U.S. relationship—

*Indian policies in the Persian Gulf could become a problem if the U.S. attacks Iraq. India maintains a close relationship with Iran and Iraq and does not view them as a threat in the same way the United States does. If India does not support the United States as it broadens its war on terrorism, for example to attack Iraq, the Indo-U.S. relationship might be damaged.*

In contrast, several retired Indian military officers did not believe this disagreement would derail the Indo-U.S. military relationship. They warned, however, that India could not support a U.S. campaign against Iraq that killed large numbers of civilians because of India's close personal connection with the Iraqi people, despite widely felt contempt for Saddam Hussein.

## Unexplored Opportunities

Most Indian interviewees see opportunities for wide-reaching discussions about mutual concerns in the Persian Gulf (or West Asia) and believe that they are uniquely placed with their close relationships with nearly all states in the Persian Gulf to assist the United States in interacting with the states there. The comments from an Indian strategist reflected the views of many other Indian interviewees—

*India and the United States need to find a way to talk about the Gulf in a constructive strategic dialogue, as the key issues of convergence are many, for example, energy security, regional stability, counter-terrorism, WMD proliferation, and the future of the Islamic world.*

Most Indian interviewees observed that the United States badly needs help understanding the Islamic and ideological forces in the region and suggested that India could help the United States in this area. A well-placed Indian brigadier, like many other Indian interviewees, believed India could offer the United States insights and access in the Persian Gulf—

*With its close ties to the moderate regimes in the Persian Gulf, the United States can depend on India to play a larger role in the region. Moreover, as the second largest Muslim country in the world, India can help the United States understand the “Muslim psyche” as it prosecutes its war on terrorism—the U.S. military cannot fight terrorism without understanding the root causes of Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic thinking.*

A retired Indian Lt. general expanded on this theme—

*First, India sits in the center of the Islamic world that spans from Northern Africa to Southeast Asia. Second, India’s large Muslim population dictates that India’s leader must not only understand but also accommodate Muslim concerns and sensitivities. Third, driven by internal political, economic, and strategic reasons, we have cultivated close ties with Islamic countries in Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf. All of these factors could benefit the United States.*

Several Indian interviewees expressed an interest in discussing, even if only in track II fora, issues that will affect the long-term stability of the region, such as political strategies for regime change in Iran and Iraq, U.S. objectives in the region, and strategies for countering financial networks supporting terrorism. A highly regarded journalist noted that the United States could interpret the Indian government’s refrain from criticizing President Bush’s “axis of evil” speech as an invitation for dialogue on difficult strategic issues in the region.

These views of India’s potential contribution to U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf will find great resonance with several Americans in policymaking positions. The handful of Americans who identified the Persian Gulf as an area of cooperation articulated a similar vision for India’s role in U.S. policy toward the Islamic world generally and the Persian Gulf specifically.

An American colonel, alone among the American interviewees, noted possible opportunities for leveraging the Indo-U.S. relationship in the Gulf to create mutual advantage—

*Like the United States, India seeks regional stability in the Persian Gulf. India maintains close relationships with all states in the Middle East from Saudi Arabia and Syria to Israel, to Turkey and Iran. India views Iran differently from the United States and could help the Administration open a relationship with Iran if it sought such a policy.*

One American policymaker described India in the context of an “arc of crisis”—

*The swath of geography from southeastern Europe to South Asia represents a “arc of crisis” that is anchored by the Balkans at one end and India at the other. Changes are underway in this arc: Turkey is in this arc and may be moving away from Europe. Iraq will likely be the target of U.S. military aggression to remove Saddam Hussein. Afghanistan will be rebuilt. Pakistan is starting to turn to the West. We [DoD policymakers] even see some of the Gulf States starting to liberalize their politics. In this context, India is a critical partner in helping the United States change the governments in the Persian Gulf and in improving U.S. relations with key governments in the region.*

Another American policymaker saw the value of India’s different perspective of several key players in the Persian Gulf.

*India provides the United States with a different window into the Persian Gulf. India looks at Iran differently and has better relationships with Iran and Saudi Arabia. India could contribute to promoting stability in the Gulf in ways in which the United States is incapable by leveraging its influence with these states.*

In general, these interviews leave the strong impression that while the Indians are deeply concerned about their position in the Gulf and see it as an important area of converging interests with the United States, few Americans grasp this strategic connection or, alternatively, they discount it.

## Sea Lanes of Communication

### Agreement on Importance of Potential Threats

Protecting the SLOCs from the Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca emerged from all the interviews as the strongest area of strategic convergence. No interviewee on either side offered a contrary view. Most of the military officers on both sides pointed to SLOC protection as “the most promising area of cooperation.” An American major general expressed the views shared by many others—



*Naval cooperation to protect the sea lanes is the most promising area of cooperation because the Americans and Indians share a strong interest in SLOC protection, freedom of navigation, and the maintenance of energy flows from the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea.*

A retired Indian Lt. general described SLOC protection in this way—

*The most important area of common interest is SLOC protection. The Indians have the capability to take on some of the responsibility without offending China.*

Indians and Americans recognized that SLOC protection will be increasingly important as trade and energy imports continue to grow. Two American colonels characterized the growing importance of energy security—

*Sixty percent of the world's energy traverses through the sea lanes linking the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia, passing through India's EEZ, and that number is estimated to rise to 80 percent in the next decade. This upward trend will focus attention of both militaries on these SLOCs.*

India's high energy dependence on the Persian Gulf makes it particularly vulnerable to a disruption in the SLOCs. The economic impact would be devastating.

Indian and American military officers believe that SLOC protection has several elements—

- Anti-piracy
- Counter-drug
- Counter-arms
- Anti-pollution and environmental remediation
- Search and rescue.

Several Indian naval officers (acting and retired) added maritime terrorism to the list of threats that the U.S. and Indian navies must be prepared to counter and warned that the region's SLOCs lie adjacent to regional hot spots (e.g., Indonesia and Burma) whose instability could spill into the sea lanes.

## Operating in the SLOCs: How and Where

Policymakers and military officers on both sides heralded the Indian Navy's assistance escorting high-value assets through the Strait of Malacca as the first concrete

example of military cooperation—"a positive step in the right direction." However, U.S. and Indian views of the meaning and value of this cooperation diverge. For example, although supportive of the initiative, one retired Indian diplomat wondered whether the U.S. military had an agenda of its own beyond escorting assistance.

Several high-ranking American interviewees at PACOM believe that India gains "legitimacy" to expand its military role in Southeast Asia if it has America's blessing. As one put it, America's request for India's support in policing the Strait of Malacca gives the Indians "a chance to spread their wings."

In contrast, no Indian interviewee accepted the notion that somehow American approval had "legitimized" India's actions. To the contrary, after receiving the Americans' request, the Indian government took several weeks to consult with other regional actors—Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Australia—to determine whether Indian patrols in the Strait of Malacca would be acceptable to them. A retired Indian brigadier observed that this mistaken notion of the United States conferring "legitimacy" on something the Indian military decided to undertake was symptomatic of the American go-it-alone mentality generally—

*As the only super power, the United States can unilaterally make a decision to patrol the Strait of Malacca. In contrast, India must consult with its neighbors to ensure that they support an Indian role in patrolling the region.*

For a highly placed Indian brigadier, the U.S. Navy's request for assistance reflected the U.S. tendency to make decisions without a dialogue with its partners. He recounted that the U.S. request caught the Indian military completely unaware—

*India's Washington mission had only been discussing logistics, refueling, rest and relaxation issues with the U.S. Navy in late 2001, so when an American delegation raised the issue of escorting high-value assets during a visit in New Delhi, the Indian government was not prepared to respond. It took the Indian government several weeks to shift their response from shock to approval. First, we [the Indian government] had to figure out that the escorts were intended to defend against piracy, thus would not be construed as directed against any state in the region. Second, we had to assess what was involved—the Indian Navy had little experience conducting escorting missions of this kind. Third, we had to consult with other regional actors.*

Indian policymakers cautioned that naval cooperation should not be limited to the eastern SLOCs in the Bay of Bengal and Strait of Malacca, even though Indian military officers' are enthusiastic about the Navy's new responsibility in the Strait of Malacca and the engagement activities discussed at Navy Executive Steering Group in February 2002. Many Indian interviewees asserted that the Indian military is even more concerned about the Strait of Hormuz and the Arabian Sea, from which most of India's energy flows and where most of its offshore energy assets are located.

An Indian general explained that the bulk of Indian naval assets are located along its western coast in the Arabian Sea, not the Bay of Bengal. An Indian policymaker characterized Indian concerns like this—

*Indo-U.S. cooperation that is limited to the eastern region will reach a threshold. The relationship will stall if cooperation does not extend beyond the eastern region to address India's concerns to the West. The way the U.S. military divides up the world creates problems for Indo-U.S. military cooperation.*

Only a few American interviewees volunteered that India's most threatening SLOC problems lie not in Southeast Asia but in the Middle East, reflecting, perhaps, the pervasive PACOM-centered view of the respondents. Those Americans who did recognize India's interests in the Middle East believed that India lacks the capabilities to operate there. In addition, several U.S. policymakers observed that DoD leadership prefers to focus naval cooperation on the Bay of Bengal so as not to excite the Pakistanis.

## The War on Terrorism

### First Response to 9/11: Missed Opportunity

Both sides recognized that the initial weeks following the September terrorist attacks marked a major dip in the relationship when the United States did not respond promptly to India's initial offer of unprecedented support for U.S. operations against Al Qaeda. An American policymaker's description of the effect on the relationship was echoed by many in Washington—

*After 9/11, the Indians seized an enormous strategic opportunity by offering the U.S. full cooperation immediately after the terrorist attacks. The Bush Administration's decision to use Pakistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom represented the biggest shock to the relationship since the nuclear tests. The Indians had the sense of "being jilted at the church door." This led to a difficult time in the relationship, but the Bush Administration tried to suggest that the war on terrorism should not detract from the long-term objective of building a strategic relationship.*

Many military officers and civilian personnel at PACOM commented on the missed opportunity to build and consolidate the Indo-U.S. military relationship. They argued that the United States should have taken full advantage of what the Indians had to offer, although several Americans conceded that Operation Enduring Freedom would have been extremely complex to execute across two unified commands.

Indian interviewees emphasized that the "lack of communication" or "lack of response to their initial offer of support" inflicted more damage on the relationship



than the U.S. decision to support Pakistan. A highly placed brigadier reported that the Indians felt “completely stonewalled” by the initial lack of communication. The Indians believed that they extended unprecedented opportunities to the United States to cooperate in the campaign against terrorism after the terrorist attacks on 9/11—and coincidentally to build a larger strategic framework for future cooperation—but the United States failed to respond or even to communicate effectively.

## Strategic Convergence in War on Terrorism

American and Indian views of counter-terrorism as an area of strategic convergence are mixed. The strongest agreement is that the events on 9/11 represented a “catalyst” for a new relationship. In all the interviews, the Indians professed a sense of vindication about the terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many Indian interviewees argued that the United States’ rapid and powerful campaign against terrorism has brought the two countries closer together and “changed the atmospherics” of the relationship. The following is typical of Indian responses—

*The public view of the United States is changing, particularly since it is perceived that the United States is now fighting terrorism in the region. U.S. actions demonstrate increased awareness and understanding of Indian concerns.*

Indians and Americans identified specific areas of cooperation related to counter-terrorism that will strengthen the Indo-U.S. military relationship. For example, policymakers on both sides laud the success of the Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism that existed before 9/11 as well as new initiatives, including NSC-NSCS-level discussions on cyber-terrorism. According to a senior Indian policymaker—

*The Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism has emerged as something fundamentally different from the original objective. Of India’s 12 Joint Working Groups on Terrorism with different countries, none is as robust as the one with the United States. The Indo-U.S. Working Group has focused on building capacity to respond to WMD threats and has developed a military component.*

Many American military officers mentioned the benefits of learning from the Indian military’s experiences in fighting terrorism, particularly in the areas of intelligence sharing and joint training. Indians would like to combine U.S. technology with their experience combating terrorism. For example, both Indian and U.S. military officers expressed a desire to move forward with special operations forces training that focuses on counter-terrorism. An Indian brigadier believes Indian Special Forces could play a critical role in counter-terrorism if they were equipped with U.S. technology. In addition, many Indian interviewees advocate equipping the LOC with sensors and radio transmission detectors to enable the Indians to detect and attack terrorists as they cross. Both sides cited the Indian intelligence support during Operation Enduring Freedom as a productive start to military cooperation.

## Limitations to Cooperation on Terrorism

Despite the success of the existing counter-terrorism initiatives, Indians and Americans cited real limitations to counter-terrorism as an important area of Indo-U.S. strategic convergence. In fact, many Indians believe that cooperation on terrorism might be ephemeral, particularly as the next phases of the U.S. war on terrorism unfold. Three reasons for doubting Indo-U.S. convergence on counter-terrorism emerged from the Indian and American interviews: definitional problems, divergent views on the roots and sources of terrorism, and concerns about spillover effects.

### Definitional Problems

Both Americans and Indians point to the definitional problems and different contexts for understanding who is a terrorist and what constitutes a terrorist threat as primary obstacles. For American interviewees, the terrorist threat emanates from terrorist networks with global reach, whereas Indian interviewees emphasize combating regional terrorist threats that they encounter daily. A highly placed Indian brigadier expressed the concerns of many Indians—

*The war on terrorism has created a new impetus for the Indo-U.S. relationship, but it must be placed in context. The United States cannot only focus on the terrorism that affects the United States. It must take a holistic view of the terrorist threat and consider all levels of the threat. Terrorism tears at the moral fabric of free societies. If the United States only focuses on terrorism that affects the United States, then President Bush's words are meaningless.*

A leading Indian national security analyst isolated one aspect of the different contexts from which India and the United States approach terrorism—

*The contours of the war on terrorism for India and the United States will be different. The United States does not have 140 million Muslim citizens. India's view of the war on terrorism will likely be closer to the views of Indonesia and Malaysia than those of the United States.*

A retired Indian Lt. general expressed a widely held view on the definitional problem—

*Opportunities to cooperate on counter-terrorism interests exist, but a definitional problem persists. For India, counter-terrorism is focused on Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, whereas the United States views Pakistan as an essential partner to destroying the Al Qaeda network.*

Another retired Indian Lt. general set low expectations for cooperation on counter-terrorism—

*The United States has little to offer the Indian fight against terrorism. While the United States focuses on a global terrorist threat, India's terrorist threat is regional. Therefore, India's problem falls below the U.S. threshold of global terrorism.*

Few Americans referred to different views of the terrorist threats as an obstacle to military cooperation. However, many Americans wondered what India would receive from cooperation in the war on terrorism. For example, an American officer who has spent many years in India observed—

*Counter-terrorism could be a fruitful area of cooperation if the United States and India could reach a common definition of a terrorism. The Indians are willing to share intelligence on Al Qaeda. But the important question for the Indians is: What kind of information will the United States be willing to share with the Indians? Will the United States share information with India that implicates Pakistan? The answer is probably not.*

## Roots and Sources of Terrorism

For the Indians, President Bush's reference to the "axis of evil" in his State of the Union speech highlighted a significant divergence of views on the roots and sources of terrorism. Numerous Indians believe that the United States has failed to target the true roots of the global terrorism problem. For them, Pakistan is the most dangerous terrorist state; Afghanistan, including its Al Qaeda contingent, was merely a client state of, or surrogate for, Pakistan. A prominent Indian strategist underlined a recurring theme in interviews with Indians—

*Pakistan is the only rogue state about which the United States should be worried. It is a nuclear state with missile capabilities. It receives technical backing from China and financial backing from the Middle East. It benefits from the opium trade. It harnesses Islamic fundamentalism to achieve its strategic objectives.*

Several Indian interviewees defined the "axis of evil" as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates (UAE)—Pakistan for its infrastructural support, Saudi Arabia for its financial and spiritual support, and the UAE for its financial support of the networks—not President Bush's choices of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea.

Many Indian military officers did not expect or want U.S. assistance in fighting India's battle with cross-border terrorism. But Indian thinking on Pakistan and the U.S. role in combating terrorism is contradictory. Some Indians claimed that they do not need U.S. assistance in combating their own terrorist problem, while at the same time, they warned that if the United States fails to "solve the Pakistan problem" by destroying its terrorist infrastructure and closing the religious indoctrination system, these networks will eventually threaten the United States again. These Indians, in effect, elevated Pakistan to a global terrorist threat, and others warned of Al Qaeda



filtration into Kashmir. [19] A highly placed Indian brigadier tied U.S. interests to the Pakistan threat with this observation—

*If Pakistan is again allowed to resort to terrorism, it will hurt the United States more than India in the long-term. Pakistan is the only fertile ground for the Jihadi movement to grow and flourish because it offers all the necessary elements: networks, infrastructure, leadership, religious indoctrination, indirect government support, and Islamic fundamentalism in the military.*

In stark contrast, most American interviewees complain that Indians are fixated on Pakistan to their own disadvantage. Several military officers commented on how disappointed they were with India's intelligence briefings at the ESGs and DPG because the Indians focused only on Pakistan. Several Americans referred to Pakistan as India's "blind spot."

## Spillover Effects of War on Terrorism

Many Indian interviewees raised concerns about the potential spillover effects of future U.S. military operations against terrorism for Indian interests around the region. For example, several Indian policymakers worried that the Persian Gulf has become potentially more fractious and unstable because of U.S. actions in the war on terrorism, and that an American attack on Iraq might hasten Gulf instability. Because India imports more than 60 percent of its oil from the Persian Gulf, India would face dire economic consequences if prices spike or supplies cease. In contrast, no American indicated any sensitivity to the possible second and third order consequences of U.S. actions in the war on terrorism for Indian security and economic interests in the Persian Gulf. [20]

## Non-Proliferation Issues

Non-proliferation represents an area of strong convergence on the basic principles of impeding the proliferation of WMD, but it is also an area of strategic divergence and is considered a potential obstacle in an enduring strategic relationship, even as non-proliferation issues recede as a focal point of Indo-U.S. engagement.

On principles and perception of potential threats, U.S. and Indian thinking on proliferation issues strongly converge. The following areas of agreement emerged from the interviews—

- Both states seek to impede the proliferation of WMD to other states.

- Both states worry about the security of nuclear materials, safety of nuclear facilities, and the potential threat of terrorists developing or obtaining a nuclear weapon.
- Both militaries believe that they would benefit from more cooperation and sharing of information on non-proliferation issues.

Several Indians bemoaned the fact that Americans do not seem to appreciate India's support of the basic principles of non-proliferation. One Indian brigadier asserted that few Americans appreciated that India has pursued a nuclear policy that nearly mirrors the principles of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) without signing the agreement.

## Significant Divide in U.S. Thinking

Most Indians and Americans (military officers and policymakers) agreed that non-proliferation issues pose a potential obstacle. This obstacle stems in part from a significant divide in U.S. thinking on non-proliferation issues. The Bush Administration has removed non-proliferation issues from the main Indo-U.S. agenda and has moved forward rapidly to develop a military relationship with the Indians. One policymaker succinctly captured the essence of the Bush Administration's thinking—

*India's nuclear capability is not an obstacle but a driver of the United States' relationship with India. We [Americans] need to cultivate India as a friend to ensure that its nuclear weapons are not used against the United States or its friends. (We don't care about the British or French nuclear arsenals because they are our friends.) Moreover, engagement with India gives the U.S. more leverage on other issues related to nuclear proliferation.*

Many American interviewees believe that non-proliferation issues would continue to plague the relationship, despite this reversal in policy under the Bush Administration. They cite two reasons: First, a relatively small but determined non-proliferation constituency in the United States [21] refuses to accept India's nuclear capability and treats India as a proliferator; and second, the influence of this constituency will vary depending on the party in power. An American colonel's description of the problem reflects the views of many American interviewees—

*Proliferation is less of an issue for the new Administration, but it will always be a potential obstacle for the Indo-U.S. relationship because it is a function of the government in power. Part of the U.S. institutions will always label India as a proliferator because it has developed nuclear weapons, even though Indians technically do not proliferate. They developed their technology indigenously and they have not transferred it to others.*

A national security studies analyst who has been monitoring U.S. non-proliferation policies toward India for decades asserted that the proliferation issues that bedevil the Indo-U.S. relationship emanate from Congress—

*The most vocal opposition to India's nuclear weapons does not reside in the Administration, but in the Congress. Even today (February 2002), a number of senators are actively lobbying against India's nuclear capability and are seeking to tie India down with sanctions. Congress will always be the repository of concern about proliferation because members of Congress view India's nuclear capabilities as a real threat to U.S. interests and because the laws emanate from Congress.*

A South Asia FAO who has been working with the Indians for nearly a decade believes that the non-proliferation issue will remain an impediment to the relationship, barring a major change in U.S. policy, which was a recurring concern among American interviewees—

*Even if the U.S. military accelerates its engagement with India, the proliferation issue will not go away. In the 1990s, non-proliferation policies dominated the national security agenda and the U.S. Government helped build a number of regimes and standards to promote its non-proliferation objectives. Now some parts of the U.S. system see military engagement with India as undermining these established non-proliferation objectives. India's position on its nuclear policy will not change, hence it is inevitable that the U.S. and Indian interests will collide until the U.S. Government redefines its approach to non-proliferation. The U.S. Government must incorporate India into its non-proliferation approach and treat India like a responsible nuclear state. Until this happens, we [the United States and India] are on a collision course.*

## Uncertainty About U.S. Non-Proliferation Policy Drives Indian Concerns

The Indians are watching this divide [between engaging India and pursuing a non-proliferation agenda] in the U.S. policymaking establishment carefully. Indian interviewees raised several different concerns related to this division in U.S. thinking.

First, Indians see a growing divergence between DoD and the U.S. State Department objectives on non-proliferation issues. They wonder how this divide will affect the military-to-military relationship. Many Indian interviewees warn that Indians continue to harbor deep-seated fears that the United States seeks to remove India's nuclear capability, despite the recent positive developments in the military-to-military relationship. Furthermore, many Indians consider U.S. non-proliferation policies (and their extra-territorial reach) a potential national security threat because these policies attempt to limit India's ability to develop and acquire capabilities required to protect its national security interests. A retired Indian brigadier explained why many Indians view U.S. non-proliferation policies as a threat.



*Until the United States changes its approach to non-proliferation, its policies will be seen as a threat to India's security interests. Current U.S. policy is designed to deny India technologies. Moreover, not only does the U.S. Government deny India technologies, it actively blocks other countries from selling India technologies (e.g., Israel). For Indians, this is a direct affront to their security interests.*

Second, many Indian interviewees identify the U.S. State Department, Congress, and South Asia experts in the U.S. think tank community as a worrisome impediment to the Indo-U.S. relationship because of their positions on non-proliferation. To illustrate the problem, an influential Indian strategist recounted an experience at an Asia Society conference on Indo-U.S. relations held in Hyderabad in March 2002, where the American participants on the non-proliferation panel rehashed the themes that have dominated non-proliferation discussions for several years. This Indian strategist said that he finally stood up and asked why the panelists expected Indians to listen to their non-proliferation diatribes when most people in the Bush Administration do not agree with their positions. An Indian admiral complained that attitudes at the Department of State must change for an enduring defense supply relationship to develop.

Third, a handful of Indian interviewees are concerned that the non-proliferation constituency's influence, although significantly diminished in the Bush Administration, might increase as the Administration shifts the focus of the war on terrorism to WMD proliferation. These Indian interviewees see U.S. thinking on deterrence shifting from defensive to offensive and preemptive in nature, which raises the question of how the United States might view nuclear capabilities in South Asia. A retired Indian Lt. general summarized the concerns held by this small group of Indians.

*As U.S. concerns about rogue states and non-state actors gaining access to nuclear capabilities increase, Indians ask themselves if the United States might decide to neutralize Pakistani nuclear weapons. Pakistani capability falling into the hands of non-state actors is a real problem. But will the United States feel as if they must also neutralize Indian nuclear capabilities to keep from destabilizing the situation? If the United States followed this line of thinking, it would be highly destabilizing for the Indo-U.S. relationship.*

## Both Militaries See Benefits of Cooperation on Non-proliferation Issues

Although many Americans and Indians recognize that non-proliferation issues represent a significant obstacle in the Indo-U.S. relationship, they also see opportunities for cooperation, addressing shared non-proliferation concerns, such as nuclear safety and security, nuclear terrorism, and nuclear energy. Many American military officers spoke of the importance of opening discussions on nuclear issues, even though they recognize that existing bureaucratic and organizational obstacles in both

militaries impede a dialogue on these issues. The comments from two American colonels reflected the thinking of many of their colleagues at PACOM.

*We [U.S. military] would like to be able to influence India's nuclear program to help make it more secure. We would like to help them understand what they have created and how to use it. "They don't know what they don't know." However, such discussion must take place at a different level because PACOM has no leverage on nuclear issues and the Indian military has little or no knowledge of its nuclear program.*

*Nuclear proliferation will not be a topic at the ESGs, but the U.S. military would like to give India everything we know about nuclear surety—how to control the nuclear weapons, and rules and procedures for enforcing nuclear safety. We are willing to share all of our lessons learned from the Cold War. But political sensitivities prevent this type of discussion.*

Several retired Indian military officers believe cooperation on non-proliferation issues could be a “win-win” proposition, but U.S. policymakers must assure Indians that the U.S. Government accepts India as a nuclear power. One retired air commodore suggested that the United States must take steps to disabuse Indians of the deep-rooted suspicion that the United States seeks to take away India's nuclear option. The United States could change this perception by—

*...allowing India to acquire technology for its nuclear power generators, which would enable it to expand its nuclear power sector. The United States would not have to supply the technology itself, but allow India to obtain the necessary technology from other sources (e.g., Canada or France). Such action would not require any major changes to the current U.S. non-proliferation legal regimes, except perhaps in the Nuclear Suppliers guidelines, but it would send a powerful signal that the United States accepts India as a nuclear power.*

Non-proliferation offers many areas of cooperation that would benefit both states. But Indians send the message that the nature of the U.S. debate and thinking about non-proliferation issues must change before non-proliferation can be considered an area of cooperation rather than a potential obstacle.

## End Notes

12. Other areas of convergence and divergence mentioned by interviewees include Southeast Asia, and transnational issues, such as narco-trafficking.
13. The naming of Jaswant Singh to the Finance Ministry in summer 2002 suggests that Indians had received this message from the Americans and have started to take steps to ameliorate

- this problem, or at least change this perception. Since Jaswant Singh is regarded as a great friend of the United States, his new appointment sends a powerful signal that the Indian Government is serious about building the economic aspects of the relationship.
14. The interviewee explained that Secretary O'Neill was leaving Washington that day for the duration of Mishra's trip, making it impossible to reschedule the meeting. In fact, the interviewee indicated that O'Neill had made an extraordinary effort to accommodate Mishra because O'Neill felt the meeting was important.
  15. Casual discussions with representatives from the U.S. India Business Council suggest that these trends are starting to change. In particular, the interest in India among U.S. defense companies is increasing, which can be attributed partly to the success of the past year in reinvigorating the military-to-military relationship and partly due to changes in India's investment regulations in the defense sector.
  16. This Indian brigadier believes that the tensions along the LOC have intensified because the Indians and Pakistanis are operating with different understandings of the dynamics along the conflict continuum. The Indians, like most militaries, view the conflict continuum in an escalatory order—low-intensity conflict escalates to conventional conflict and could ultimately result in a nuclear exchange. Therefore, Indians see Pakistan's ongoing incursions as a destabilizing action that could prompt escalation to the conventional level. However, he argues that the Pakistanis do not operate on the same assumptions. They assume that their nuclear capabilities negate the potential for a conventional conflict, which in turn gives them the cover to conduct low-intensity conflict against India.
  17. Debates within the strategic thinking communities about whether China posed a real threat exist in both countries. However, the majority of active and retired military officers in both countries shared the view that China posed a threat.
  18. In a follow-up interview with an Indian brigadier, he asserted that this U.S. "blindspot" was shrinking and the gap in Indian and American views was narrowing. According to him, the many recent high-level visits and exchanges since the DPG in December 2001 had given the Indians ample opportunity to convey the depth and breadth of their interests in Central Asia.
  19. American reports on possible Al Qaeda activities in Kashmir in June 2002 supported these assertions made by Indians.
  20. Americans did not mention India's interest in the Persian Gulf in the context of the war on terrorism, but several Americans did acknowledge India's vulnerability position vis-à-vis events in the Persian Gulf due to its great dependence on energy imports from there.
  21. Most American interviewees argued that this constituency is entrenched in the Congress, Department of State, and to a lesser extent, DoD and other organizations, such as the Department of Commerce.



# Residual Perceptions of Each Other

**T**he following sections detail some of the most strongly held perceptions by both the Indians and Americans of each other, as described by the study's interviewees. However, it is important to note at this juncture that many interviewees on both sides believe that some of the old prejudices and stereotypes are breaking down and that the opportunity exists to forge an Indo-U.S. relationship that moves beyond many of the old hang-ups and disagreements. These new views and the drivers that create them are discussed at the end of the chapter.

The flurry of high-level visits and the new initiatives under the DPG have begun the process of mitigating suspicions and eroding apprehensions by building personal relationships and trust between Indian and American military officers and policymakers. Indians and Americans are cautiously optimistic about the current conditions for the relationship. Most interviewees, however, couple their optimism with realism about the difficulties ahead and differences in perceptions and expectations that will continue to challenge the relationship.

## Indian Perceptions of Americans

### The Indians' View of the Americans' View of India

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Indian perceptions of the United States, of Americans generally, and of the U.S. military tend to be deeply rooted and, in most cases, fervently held. They draw on history as the Indians understand it, on their view of America's role in the world, and, in particular, on America's past record of dealing with India.

The Indian interviewees characterize most Americans as being ignorant of India's history, in many cases not even knowing that, like America, India was born of a long revolutionary struggle and has become a vibrant democracy. At the most basic level, Indians argue that Americans do not understand what India is and how it works. Indian interviewees at all levels of the national security establishment and the military lament that their American counterparts (and the American public gener-

ally) do not understand the complexities of India's internal political structure, which reflects vast ethnic, religious, geographic, economic, and social divisions and strata. In the view of virtually all Indian interviewees, these complexities and other potential fault lines profoundly influence the way Indians see policy choices and decide on actual policy strategies. They are puzzled that Americans generally, including many American military planners and decisionmakers, do not understand these pervasive and persistent pressures and tensions, which are legacies of India's unique history. A retired brigadier captured the sentiments of most interviewees—

*Few Americans truly understand how the Indian system functions, the aspects of Indian reality that force it to function this way, or the internal logic of many of India's national security policy choices. Consequently the Americans tend to be bewildered by Indian decisions and actions. Until the two sides understand how each other operates, it will be difficult to develop a relationship of enduring strategic convergence.*

The Indian military officers who have spent time in the United States as part of an exchange or training program remarked on their American counterparts' lack of knowledge and understanding about Indian politics, culture, history, and geography. One interviewee—a retired lt. general—who spent a year at the U.S. Air War College and had the opportunity to visit many American universities, complained that this lack of knowledge of India is not limited to the U.S. military, but is in fact pervasive in the larger American society.

## Americans Misunderstood the Indo-Soviet Relationship

Indian interviewees repeatedly cited the Indo-Soviet relationship as an example of how the United States has failed to understand why India makes particular strategic choices. They put forward the following arguments as to why their relationship with the Soviets (and later the Russians) was so misunderstood.

First, they believe Americans never grasped the internal constraints within which the Indian government had to operate after Independence in 1947. Many Indian interviewees observed that the strong Communist movement in India at the time of Independence made it impossible for the Indian government to be aligned with any group or alliance that condemned Communism. Moreover, many Indian interviewees claimed that Indians did not consider their decision not to join the Americans as aligning against the Americans.

The Indians conveyed a uniform message: The Indian military never saw itself as part of the Soviet camp arrayed against U.S. interests. [22] Americans, they believe, jumped to this conclusion because of their propensity to see the world in “black and white terms,” when in fact Indians see the world as “shades of gray.” The following sentiments were typical—

*Americans could only see the world in terms of "if you are not for the United States, then you are against the United States."*

*"In the 1980s, India was seen as the #1 friend of the #1 enemy of the United States." [23]*

Second, Indian interviewees from the military—past and serving—insist that the Indo-Soviet relationship was never a military relationship per se. Many Indian military officers claimed that the United States pushed India into a defense supply relationship with the Soviets, even though the Indian military preferred U.S. equipment and technology. Yet, in their eyes, over the years, India was either denied access to U.S. technology, or the U.S. refused to give India special terms that would make U.S. equipment affordable, as it had done for Pakistan. According to a retired air commodore—

*The Indian military had always sought to acquire U.S. technologies and doctrine, and to emulate American institutions. For example, in the 1980s, the Indian Air Force (IAF) had the choice when purchasing two supersonic interceptors to counter a high-altitude threat from China—the Soviet MIG 21s or the U.S. F-104 Starfighters. The IAF preferred the F-104 Starfighters based on all criteria. Furthermore, Pakistan already operated the F-104s. But in the end, it was more cost effective to purchase the MIGs from the Soviets with payments in rupees and at lower interest rates.*

Even so, virtually all interviewees from the Indian military (active and retired) insist that this supply relationship never amounted to a traditional military-to-military relationship with the Soviet Union. They claimed that the two militaries conducted no joint or training exercises and most military-to-military contact was pro forma, filtered through the embassies. Only two senior Indian military officers acknowledged even having had contact with the Russian military. A retired admiral noted—

*My only contact with the Soviet/Russian military was during training assignments when an Indian naval unit would spend 4 to 8 weeks in the Soviet Union (and then Russia) to receive technical training to learn the mechanics and operations of newly purchased Russian platforms. We would conduct simple exercises together to demonstrate all the platforms' capabilities.*

Indian military officers worry that their American counterparts continue to harbor doubts about their relationship with Russia. These doubts, they argued, are based on what they described as the "greatest American misperception" that the Indo-Soviet defense supply relationship implied a close military relationship. Many Indian military officers, in fact, believe that they had more in common with the Americans than with the Soviets. A prominent retired lt. general summarized the paradox described by many acting and retired Indian officers—



*Despite the fact that 99 percent of Indian equipment comes from Russia, the Indian armed forces have always been more oriented toward Western culture, doctrine, warfighting concepts, and practices. This comes from their British roots and the fact that the Indian Officer Corps receives much of its training in the West—in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia.*

Third, many Indians felt that the Americans do not realize that they felt pushed into a strategic relationship with the Soviet Union in 1971. At the time, the Indians did not know what to expect from the Americans during their war with Pakistan, but they believed that the Americans were more likely to support Pakistan than India. Thus they had to take actions to counter the anticipated U.S. support for Pakistan by signing an agreement with the Soviets. To the Indian mind, when the USS Enterprise began moving toward the Bay of Bengal, Indian actions to “create a strategic balance” were justified.

## Sources of Distrust of the United States

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The interviews suggest that the Indian military approaches the prospects of a military relationship with the U.S. military with deep-seated suspicion, distrust, and apprehension. These perceptions of the United States can be attributed to no one issue or event but grow out of past U.S. policies, specific events, and actions taken by specific institutions. Several recurring themes emerged.

### The United States Supports Pakistan

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The Indians harbor a deep-seated suspicion of the United States because of U.S. support for India’s adversary—Pakistan—over past decades. The most frequent Indian complaints about overt and tacit U.S. support for Pakistan include—

- The Americans traditionally have supported Pakistani positions. For example, most Indians argued that until Kargil in 1999, Americans had generally supported Pakistan’s position on Kashmir for decades. In addition, the Indians frequently cite the U.S. positioning of the USS Enterprise in (or near) the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 war with Pakistan as the most potent symbol of the United States supporting its adversary. This move unquestionably left an indelible imprint on the Indian psyche.
- The U.S. military supplied weapons to Pakistan that it intended for use against the Communists in Afghanistan; but in fact, Pakistan used them against India.
- Over the past decade, the United States has repeatedly turned a blind eye to Chinese technology transfer to Pakistan that contributed to the development of Pakistan’s nuclear capabilities and its arsenal of ballistic and cruise missiles.

- Americans have failed to acknowledge, until 9/11, Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism in Kashmir, which the Indians refer to as a “proxy war” strategy to erode India’s military capability.

The combination of these factors leaves lingering suspicions among Indians that the U.S. military has been and will continue to be Pakistan-centric. Many Indian interviewees observed that the U.S. military is much more comfortable with the Pakistanis and believe that cooperation with Pakistan will be the “default U.S. response” to problems in the region. These perceptions were strengthened by the United States’ immediate response to 9/11. Most retired military officers described the events in this spirit—

*The Indian government extended unprecedented opportunities to the United States to cooperate in the campaign against terrorism after 9/11—and coincidentally to build a larger strategic framework for future cooperation—but the United States failed to respond or even to communicate effectively, and seemed to opt for a new relationship with Pakistan.*

## The United States Is Not a Reliable Partner or Supplier

All Indians questioned the willingness of the United States to enter into long-term strategic relationships. The Indians see Americans as quick to entice and then dismiss strategic partners when U.S. strategic interests change. An Indian admiral offered a cultural explanation for this widely held perception of the United States’ short-term, interest-driven relationships—

*The United States is a rational society that is driven by self-interest. Even at a personal level, Americans have few permanent relationships. Americans act independently, sever family ties, and shift personal relationships with little reservation. This is foreign to Indian sensibilities. In contrast to America’s rational approach, Indians follow a traditional approach in all aspects of life, and place high value on loyalty, commitment, and long-term relationships, including extended family relationships.*

Indian interviewees most frequently cited U.S. treatment of Pakistan and China as examples of the United States’ unreliability. First, for Indians, Pakistan represents an accommodating frontline state that the United States exploited during the height of the Cold War and then dropped when the war in Afghanistan ended in the late 1980s. From Pakistan’s experience as an American partner, Indians conclude that the United States, narrowly focused on its own national interests, neglect even its most accommodating “surrogate states” when its interests change. The Indians ask: How will the United States treat India when U.S. strategic interests in South Asia, Southeast Asia, or the Middle East change?

Second, Indian interviewees draw different lessons from the United States' relationship with China. The Indians watched the United States court the Chinese, using them as a "strategic balance" or counterweight to the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the strategic rationale for the partnership waned, undermining its foundations. Based on China's experience, Indians believe that any relationship that casts India as a "balancer" to China, or any state, will not last.

Third, many Indians doubt the United States will be a reliable supplier of technology because of past actions taken by Congress to curtail supplies of spare parts and other technology transfer agreements. U.S. sanctions, particularly the most recent following India's 1998 nuclear tests, left a deep negative impression on the Indians because these sanctions cut off supplies not only from the United States but also from third-party suppliers. Retired military officers complained forcefully about this American action, which interrupted supplies from manufacturers in the UK and the Netherlands, despite decades-long supply relationships.

A visceral distrust for Congress colors many Indians' thinking about the Indo-U.S. relationship and leaves Indians with a deep sense of uncertainty. A retired Lt. general captured the essence of many Indians' sense of suspicion and uncertainty.

*Indians harbor deep suspicions of the U.S. Congress. We are always concerned about how the Congress will respond to events in India. How will Congress respond to CNN reports? What kind of knee-jerk reaction can India expect from Congress on issues unrelated to the military relationship, such as human rights, and how will Congress's reaction affect the overall relationship? For this reason, Congress is seen as the major obstacle in the transfer of technology. What will prompt Congress to cut off India's access to spare parts?*

## America's Larger Strategic Vision Is Unclear

Indian interviewees repeatedly asked: What does the United States want in India's part of the world, and where does India fit in this vision? The interviews suggest that two types of concerns make Indian military officers apprehensive about a relationship with the U.S. military. First, Indians worry about U.S. intentions in the region because they do not fully understand them. A number of military officers (retired and acting) posed the question: Why is the United States interested in India now? They want to understand U.S. objectives and strategies in the region generally, and in the war on terrorism specifically. They want to understand how India fits into the U.S. military view of the region. To date, they feel that no one has explained this to them adequately. Moreover, no mechanisms of joint consultation on larger strategic issues have been established.

Second, because the Indian military has little sense of America's larger strategic objectives in their region, they are anxious about what they might have to give up and



what they might receive in any relationship with the United States. In fact, many interviewees, including high-ranking Indian policymakers, revealed that what India gets out of the Indo-U.S. relationship would depend on U.S. objectives. Until they can see what those objectives are, they feel unable to design their own cost-benefit calculus.

## U.S. Superpower Status Could Limit India's Options

All Indians accept that the United States is the world's sole super power. When Indians spoke of U.S. predominance, they referred to it as a "fact." They are resigned to the world's being unipolar for many decades, recognizing that the United States will have the ability to act alone into the foreseeable future. For this reason, military officers, in particular, believe that India must engage the U.S. military. Several interviewees quoted historian Paul Kennedy's recent conclusion that "the United States has the power to overcome overstretch problems" that have plagued other empires. Most Indians believe that because unipolarity is an unnatural state for the international system, the international community will be slowly transition back to a multipolar system. During this transition period, the United States is and will be the primary actor and will likely take actions, many of which will probably be destabilizing, to forestall the transition toward a multipolar equilibrium.

For most Indian interviewees, America's predominance raises a number of fears—

- **Potential to Limit India's Strategic Options**—Indians fear that U.S. predominance will erode India's independence and limit its strategic options, even if the United States is pursuing policies that coincide with Indian interests. All Indian interviewees cautioned that Indians would reject any Indo-U.S. relationship that circumscribes India's strategic options and freedom or limits its ability to address its security concerns. They are particularly sensitive about two issues—India's relationship with Russia and its nuclear capability (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of these issues). In addition, the Indians worry that the United States could use its predominance to impede strategic relationships that India needs to develop for its own security reasons that may be contrary to U.S. interests, for example, with Iran or Myanmar.
- **Second and Third Order Consequences of U.S. Actions**—Many Indian interviewees worry that the United States is insensitive or oblivious to the effect of its policies and strategic decisions on other states. For example, many interviewees expressed concern that U.S. military actions—for example, increasing its presence in Central Asia and Pakistan—might provoke China into asserting its interests elsewhere such as in Myanmar.
- **U.S. Predominance as a Hot Button for Political Opposition**—Indian military officers warned that some Indian intellectuals view any relationship with the United States as "colonialism through the back door." Consequently,

the Indian military officers are particularly sensitive to charges that “external forces” are manipulating them. [24] Many interviewees worry that U.S. predominance could give the impression of India bending to an American agenda, even when U.S. and Indian interests openly converge. Indian military officers explained that consequently, the Indian government must relentlessly and publicly reject any notion that India is becoming a pawn or a surrogate of U.S. policy, lest the intellectuals attempt to mobilize anti-American sentiment to sway public opinion against the government. Many military officers cited possible American efforts to use India as a balancer to China as a touchstone issue in this regard. Another issue could be U.S. presence in South and Central Asia, which is gaining visibility.

These fears underline common concerns for Indians as they move forward with the Indo-U.S. relationship: How does India co-exist with the United States without allowing the United States to define the strategic agenda when their interests converge? How does India protect its interests when the United States acts in ways that are inimical to Indian interests?

## The United States Is Keeping the Developing World Down

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Many Indian interviewees believe that the West, led by the United States, pursued strategies to suppress developing and emerging powers to preserve its dominance in the 1990s. As evidence, they cite specific policy initiatives designed to impede or undermine the development of other developing states, including India, from challenging U.S. interests, for example—

- Promoting international non-proliferation regimes, most notably the NPT, CTBT, Wassenaar Agreement, Missile Technology Control Regime, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, that stemmed the flow of technology to India
- Supporting international environmental treaties related to climate change that would make economic development more expensive
- Advocating incorporation of labor and environmental standards into international trade negotiations and as criteria for entry into the World Trade Organization, which imposes barriers to trade for developing countries
- Supporting the promotion of human rights, justifying U.S. interference in the internal politics of countries and penalizing those that do not meet its exacting standards.

Many of the Indian interviewees believe that these American policy actions constitute a coherent strategy to develop legal international regimes designed to perpetuate the existing political, economic, and technological domination of the United States at the expense of developing countries.

## Role of the U.S. Military in Forging the Relationship

All Indian military officers (acting and retired) emphasized that their perceptions of the U.S. military are first and foremost shaped by great respect and admiration for the U.S. military and the United States as a country. Of all the Indian interviewees, the military officers were most enthusiastic about military cooperation and claimed that they have always been eager to engage the Americans, but political obstacles repeatedly blocked progress.

That said, Indian military officers believe that the responsibility for moving the Indo-U.S. military relationship forward lies mainly with the U.S. military. The reasons for this widely held belief vary.

First, some Indian interviewees believe that India has already signaled its commitment to the relationship, for example, India's support for the U.S. missile defense initiative, and more important, India's unprecedented offer of military support after 9/11. These Indians claim that when the United States failed to respond immediately to India's offers—which came at high political risk to the Indian government—it undermined an atmosphere of mutual trust that had been building slowly since 1998. Today India's political leadership will be reluctant to support future initiatives if they risk rejection. A prominent strategic affairs journalist explained this Indian view.

*Indians avoid taking the initiative when there is a chance their offer might be declined. Rejection of this kind is seen as a humiliation. On the same token, they [Indians] shy away from making a request, unless they are sure it will be fulfilled. The Indian leadership already feels as if they humiliated themselves after 9/11. Thus the responsibility to take the next step lies with the United States.*

Second, given India's demonstration of commitment, Indians need the United States to demonstrate its commitment to India with "actions, not words." Many Indian interviewees believe that only U.S. actions can diminish their apprehensions, distrust, and suspicions. For most Indians, an appropriate demonstration of U.S. commitment will include a mixture of diplomatic, political, and economic actions: increased sensitivities to India's strategic interests; increased economic ties, particularly U.S. foreign investment in the Indian economy; and visible changes in U.S. policy on technology transfer and non-proliferation.

Third, a retired major general argued that as the senior partner, the United States carries more responsibility and more burdens to make the relationship work. As the junior partner, India finds itself on the receiving end of the relationship—receiving economic aid, foreign investment, technology transfer, or seeking specific actions, such as lifting sanctions. For these reasons, only U.S. actions can address the problems that plague the relationship.



## U.S. Bureaucracy Resembles Indian Bureaucracy

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Many Indian interviewees complained that the U.S. bureaucracy can be as impenetrable and non-responsive as the Indian bureaucracy, and it is even more incomprehensible. This perception grows out of their experiences with the Department of State and Department of Commerce, which have authority over the licensing process for direct commercial sales. A prominent Indian civil servant captured the essence of widely felt frustrations.

*Indians see the U.S. licensing process as a black box that defies understanding and offers little room for flexibility, given the rigidity of U.S. export control laws.*

Moreover, many Indian officers and policymakers observed that they have seen little change in the speed at which their requests are processed since sanctions were lifted in October 2001. Consequently, Indians view American bureaucrats as potential obstacles to the Indo-U.S. military relationship.

## American Perceptions of Indians

American perceptions of India and Indians tend to be more superficial and recently acquired. They are formed in large part on the basis of individual experiences of interactions between U.S. servicemen and servicewomen and their Indian counterparts during the past decade, and even more recently. Moreover, there is a reactive quality to the American perceptions of India and Indians, including of the Indian military, in that American perceptions are heavily influenced by what they believe the Indians think about them.

## American View of Indians' Perceptions of Americans

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American views of how they believe the Indians view America are remarkable for their uniformity in this sample. For example, all American interviewees believe that Indians harbor a deep-seated distrust of the United States, and that Indians have been conditioned through constant "U.S. bashing" over decades, which produced an instinctive knee-jerk "anti-American response" to U.S. actions in the past.

The sources of Indian distrust of the United States cited by the American interviewees parallel the sources of distrust described by the Indian interviewees, suggesting that the Americans generally understand how the Indians perceive them. Sources of distrust mentioned by the Americans includes—

- **Cold War Opponents**—Some Americans believe that the Indians view the United States as having been aligned against them during the Cold War.

- **Unreliable Partner and Supplier**—Many American interviewees cited Indian accusations that the United States is an unreliable partner. In this regard, many American military officers, particularly those who worked with the Indians before 1998, blamed the sanctions imposed after India's nuclear tests for Indians' entrenched suspicion of the U.S. military. One South Asia FAO argued that the sanctions undermine Indian trust in two ways:

*First, Indians do not believe that they can trust any U.S. commitment because a change in political climate might render all discussions irrelevant overnight. Second, the sanctions demonstrated no U.S. understanding of or sensitivity to India's national security concerns.*

- **Relationship with Pakistan**—Many interviewees attribute India's distrust to the U.S. relationship with Pakistan. Many interviewees at PACOM observed that the decision to use Pakistan as the frontline state against the Taliban in Afghanistan reinforced this distrust because the Indians feel as if the United States has once again subordinated India's interests to Pakistan's.
- **U.S. Power and Lack of Understanding of U.S. Motives**—Several American interviewees who have worked closely with the Indians assert that Indian skepticism grows out of a lack of understanding of U.S. motives and intentions. These interviewees observe that Indians worry that U.S. predominance might lead the United States to take actions that could do harm to India's interests. One American policymaker who has spent many years working with the Indians expanded on this Indian fear, explaining that Indians are more worried about the inept use of U.S. power than any action taken with forethought or malice.

## Residual Distrust for the Indians

The interviews with Americans also revealed that Americans harbor distrust of their Indian counterparts. The distrust emanates from different sources depending on the interviewee's position (civilian or military) and past experience with the Indians. For example, a number of military officers claimed that the U.S. military continues to harbor a residual distrust for the Indians because of their past relationship with the Soviet Union. One general put it succinctly—

*We [the U.S. military] distrust any military that flies MIGs. This is an ingrained perception that has not yet faded.*

For other interviewees, their distrust of the Indians stems from personal experience with them. Several interviewees, whose views are shaped by their experiences with the Indians in the 1980s and 1990s, accused the Indians of exaggerating their concerns in an attempt to manipulate U.S. policy in their favor. For example, one

DoD civilian, who interacted with Indians in the 1990s, described his interactions with Indians—

*Indians had a propensity of trying to twist U.S. policy to meet Indian needs during the bilateral meetings in the early 1990s. For example, they wanted the Americans to condemn the Chinese by claiming that the Chinese were operating in the Indian Ocean and they had seen “Chinese periscopes in the waves.” Our [American] attempts to verify (with U.S. intelligence sources) these assertions failed. We found no evidence of Chinese military presence in the Indian Ocean. But in subsequent meetings, they continue to make these claims, which left the impression with the Americans that Indians were telling “bold-face lies” or significant exaggerations.*

This interviewee posed the question: “What does telling bold-face lies say about what the Indians think about Americans? Do they think we are stupid?” Consequently, this interviewee recommended being cautious when approaching the Indians—listen to what they have to say and then try to verify it. He compares Indians’ mantra today, “Musharraf cannot be trusted” to past Indian assertions that they saw a “Chinese periscope behind each wave in the Indian Ocean.”

Several military officers who interact regularly with Indians explain that it is difficult to trust the Indians because of the lack of transparency at all levels. The Indians demand transparency on the U.S. side, but their system remains opaque and frequently inaccessible to outsiders, particularly the military.

Finally, several military officers argued that some agencies in the U.S. Government (e.g., the U.S. State Department or U.S. Department of Commerce) question India’s export control laws and procedures and doubt India’s ability to guarantee the safeguarding of U.S. technology, particularly given the high level of corruption. [25] These agencies are worried about technology leakage to other states, particularly Russia. One colonel succinctly characterized this source of distrust—

*The U.S. Government will not share technology with the Indians because we [the USG] do not trust that India will not share U.S. technology with the Russians or other states, such as Iran and Iraq. Frankly, we will not share high technology with the Indians while Russian technicians are running around the country.*

## India Is an Emerging Power— But Is Unsatisfied With Its Treatment

Approximately two-thirds of the American interviewees identify India as an emerging power in Asia that will be an important player in the future. The following comments represent the thinking of many military officers at PACOM—



*Indians will be able to carry great weight in the international community as they shift from taking on the role of leader of the Third World to be more in line with the mature democracies of the world.*

*Indians are aggressively striving to be a world leader, and the United States has much to offer them in achieving this objective. India is more stable and capable than any other country in its immediate region.*

*India is a rising power. It is a middle power—a hegemon in its region. India has built and sustained democratic institutions over several decades and proved to be capable of transitioning beyond the Nehru family to a democratic country. India is a traditional country that is just beginning to enact economic reform.*

Other American interviewees caution that although India has future potential, the Indians should first focus on the problems in their own region. The following observations made by a policymaker and high-ranking military officer, respectively, reflect this position—

*The United States would benefit greatly if India could be a constructive partner in regions where we [India and the United States] share strategic interests—e.g., the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia—which would enable India to move beyond acting as a regional power. But first the United States should encourage the resolution of regional problems. India will be unable to develop power projection capabilities until it deals with its regional and internal problems, including economic problems.*

*India sees itself as a burgeoning world power, and it seeks to make a contribution at the international level. The United States would like to see India start by making a contribution in its own region, particularly in countering transnational problems, such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and piracy.*

Many American interviewees have the impression that their Indian counterparts believe that Americans do not respect India's emerging position on the world stage, even though American military officers and policymakers pay lip service to the importance of India's emerging strategic weight in the region. Americans repeatedly voiced this theme: The Indians do not believe that Americans respect them.

## Highly Sensitive About Sovereignty

For nearly all American interviewees, India's hyper-sensitivity about its sovereignty shapes their perceptions of Indians. American interviewees would describe their Indian counterparts as "coveting their sovereignty," "sensitive and prickly about their independence," or "insecure and highly sensitive about their sovereignty." Moreover, many Americans frequently cited India's carefully guarded sovereignty as a potential problem in the relationship because it causes Indians to view U.S. actions with sus-

picion and imposes limits on bilateral military cooperation. For example, many interviewees believe that Indians frequently use “protecting India’s sovereignty” to justify decisions that may defy U.S. requests, leaving the impression that it is difficult to work with the Indians. One civilian at PACOM with years of experience working with the Indians cited India’s initial refusal to sign the GSOMIA as an infuriating example of why the sovereignty issues make it difficult to work with the Indians—

*For approximately 7 years, the Indians have refused to sign a basic agreement that allows the two governments to shared classified information, the GSOMIA. They [the Indians] felt that the requirement of having U.S. inspectors review India’s procedures to ensure the integrity of classified information infringed on Indian sovereignty. But without this agreement, security cooperation discussions could only be limited to non-classified issues, thereby stymieing the process prior to the 1998 sanctions. The Indians finally signed in January 2002.*

Many military officers observed that Indian sensitivity about sovereignty could impose limits on bilateral cooperation. They make three types of observations—

- First, the Indian military cannot do anything that would appear to be “kow-towing” to U.S. policy.
- Second, the Indian military will refuse to operate under a U.S. command and control structure because Indians want to be in charge of any operation. One American colonel, who worked closely with the Indians in responding to the Gujarat earthquake in spring 2001, observed that the U.S. military has a challenge ahead to convince the Indians to “play” with the U.S. military—“the Indians want to be in charge.”
- Third, many American interviewees hold the view that Indians will conduct a military operation (e.g., peacekeeping, disaster relief, or combat operations) only under the auspices of the United Nations. An observation from a South Asia FAO reflected this view:

*The Indians will refuse to do anything that compromises their sovereignty. For example, they will not participate in a multilateral force until it is under the umbrella of the United Nations. If the multilateral force has no UN support, then the Indian military’s participation is seen as compromising India’s sovereignty.*

## Indians Are Difficult To Work With

All American interviewees, regardless of their rank, position, and experience interacting with Indians, describe them as difficult to work with. Most interviewees who interact with Indians were readily willing to share their unpleasant or frustrating experiences, even if they have good personal relationships with their Indian counterparts. [26]

American interviewees perceive the Indians as difficult to work with largely because they view Indian bureaucracy as rigid and centralized, and incapable of supporting individual decisionmaking. Americans accuse Indians of being “non-responsive” because Indian communications with their American counterparts are inevitably late, incomplete, or non-existent. Most interviewees recounted instances—recent and past—of e-mailing their Indian counterparts repeatedly to organize meetings/visits or of sending them invitations to regional events and receiving no response. One USG civilian interviewee who had been planning a meeting with a group of Indians described the attempt as sending messages into a “black hole.” Another military officer who was planning a visit to India for his commanding general complained about having a “one-way conversation” with his Indian counterparts prior to the trip. He provided information to his Indian hosts and asked questions about the visit, but he received no response. This officer and others in the sample describe their anxiety and frustration at not being able to prepare their superiors properly for engagements with Indians (see Chapter 6 for further discussion of the unresponsiveness of India’s bureaucracy).

Several American interviewees complained that Indians made it difficult to plan an event because they would frequently withdraw from or cancel exercises at the last minute. For example, one interviewee involved with the initial DPGs in the mid-1990s noted that the third meeting was delayed twice because the Indians kept changing the dates at the last minute. [27]

Other interviewees describe conflicts between the Indians’ intellectual approach to problems versus the Americans’ pragmatic approach. Many interviewees referred to the Indians’ “intellectual arrogance.” According to one—

*The Indian elites are quintessential intellectuals. They thrive off of fine-tuned arguments and logic. But U.S. military officers and businessmen are not interested in intellectual arguments—they are interested in practical issues. Consequently, they find India’s intellectual arrogance off-putting and counter-productive.*

A number of American military officers who interacted with Indians in the early 1990s revealed that they would much rather interact with the Pakistanis, whom they describe as more accommodating, flexible, and easy to work with.

## Mixed Views on Competence and Capability of Indian Military

American perceptions of Indian military competence and capabilities are mixed. On one hand, officers at PACOM consider the Indian military to be a highly capable and well-trained potential partner in their AOR. Many officers at PACOM are impressed by India’s sophisticated tactics, operational training, and high level of technology, despite the resource constraints within which the Indian military must



operate. Comments from several high-ranking officers at PACOM reflected the views of those who see India as a capable partner—

*Indians have a robust technology base that no other nation has, including developing vast capabilities in the space and software development sectors. Collaborating with them would benefit both militaries. If the two air forces could get past the interoperability problems, India could be a capable partner.*

*The Indian Army is not only large; it is a well-trained and highly capable force. They operate with sophisticated tactics and operational training that exceeds the capabilities of other militaries in the region. The Navy is capable at sea and is one of the few navies in the world that can conduct a side-by-side refueling with two ships moving. [28] Moreover, the Indians are engineers who are capable of handling technically sophisticated operations.*

These American officers are highly complimentary of their Indian counterparts' "technical prowess" and manpower to support complex operations, even though they lack technical capabilities. One officer recounted that in responding to the Gujarat earthquake, the Indian military moved 30,000 troops by air across the country to the earthquake site in approximately 72 hours, which is about the same amount of time the U.S. military would require for the same operation. He noted that the Indian military prepared careful calculations of weights and centers of gravity of pallets by hand, without using computers or similar technology.

On the other hand, many American officers observed that while the Indians have a large military and a relatively more sophisticated military infrastructure than others in the region, the infrastructure is crumbling. Many Americans who had recently traveled to Delhi commented on the dilapidated state of the Ministry of Defense and other government buildings, and argued that the neglect of these buildings offers a glimpse of the challenges facing the Indian military as it modernizes. One American general described his walk through Indian Army headquarters as "walking back in time." Another civilian interviewee from PACOM questioned "how any self-respecting military could allow bare light bulbs to hang dangerously from the ceiling."

Other interviewees who have had decades-long experience working with Indians painted an even much more pessimistic picture of the Indian military, arguing that the United States should not be deceived by the Indian military's size. They believe that the poor quality and lack of maintenance of India's weapon systems limit its ability to be a capable partner.

## Highly Protocol Conscious: Indians Are Easily Slighted and Easily Flattered

Nearly every American interviewee in Washington and at PACOM who regularly interacts with Indians perceives them to be highly protocol conscious. This behavior leads to two different American perceptions. First, Indians are easily slighted or insulted by U.S. actions (or inactions). Second, satisfying Indians' obsession with protocol with symbolic gestures can pay big dividends in the relationship.

Many American interviewees attribute the Indians' obsession with protocol to their British traditions and an ingrained superiority complex. For example, several interviewees argued that India's sensitivity to protocol caused the Indians to cancel the third DPG in 1997. One South Asia FAO described the problem—

*The DPG was led by the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy [USD (Policy)] and the Indian Secretary of Defense, the highest ranking bureaucrat in the Ministry of Defense. So when DoD decided to send the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs—as opposed to the USD (Policy)—to the DPG, the Indians pulled out and the meeting was cancelled. The Indians refused to send their Secretary of Defense to meet such a low ranking American (7th or 8th in the DoD civilian hierarchy).*

Several officers at PACOM described how the Indian air chief took umbrage at the presence of personal security guards accompanying an American general during his trip to India, which implied to the air chief that the general did not trust India to provide his security detail. No Indian communicated this directly to the general or his staff; rather, the Indians communicated through official channels to the American embassy. Three days later, the American embassy informed the general's staff that he was insulting his Indian hosts. Other officers described protocol-driven misunderstandings that have made them extremely uncomfortable. Another American general recalled that the first question the Indians asked him when he arrived in India for top-level meetings with the Indian Army was when he would become a major general. [29]

American interviewees believe that the Indians prefer to send their higher ranking officers to Washington to meet officers of equivalent rank and/or equivalent responsibilities, rather than to PACOM for visits or to participate in events. For example, according to American interviewees, the Indians sent a lower ranking officer to PACOM's Joint Chiefs Conference in 2002 because India's new chairman of the Integrated Defence Staff wanted his first trip to the United States to be to Washington, not Hawaii. Several years ago, the Indian chief of the Army Staff participated in a PACOM conference only after being assured of a subsequent meeting with his counterpart, General Shinseki, and with General Shelton in Washington.

American interviewees with long experience in India warn that the U.S. military must not underestimate the importance of perceptions in making or breaking the

relationship. These interviewees believe that symbolic gestures can have a significant positive impact on the relationship. A South Asia FAO who has spent several years in South Asia described this perspective—

*For the Indians, perception is everything. President Bush's drop-by meeting with Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh in April 2002, and Richard Armitage's stop in India in May 2001 to talk about National Missile Defense had an enormous impact on the Indo-U.S. relationship. These gestures communicated that the United States is treating India like a friend. For a relatively small cost, ESG meetings should shuttle between Washington and Delhi, not Honolulu and Delhi. The same people can be around the table, but holding the meetings in Washington will change the way the Indians perceive how they are being treated. The U.S. military needs to plan counter visits with the Indians in which the Indian generals are interacting with three stars in Washington. These kinds of small gestures will have a huge pay-off for the relationship.*

A colonel who has spent several years in India observed—

*For the Indians, the act is much more important than the substance; the theory is more important than the execution; and the tactic is more important than the strategy.*

## Indian Preoccupation with History

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Many American interviewees report that Indians can quickly become mired in history. Several American interviewees who have participated in meetings with Indians recalled that Indians frequently start meetings by asking about the status of the past agreements, as if they are just picking up where the relationship left off. However, the Americans around the table, many of whom were new to their posts, possessed none of the background knowledge to address past issues. One colonel observed—

*The Indians can be accused of having many cockeyed views, but they always have a substantive knowledge of the historical interactions, which makes it difficult to counter their arguments. They always raise the history of events during meetings.*

Several interviewees assert that Americans need to be more informed about the key events in the relationship. A colonel who has spent many years in South Asia warned—

*The U.S. military needs to pay attention to Indian "historical touchstones" and references that shape Indian perceptions of events and emerge repeatedly in any interactions with the Indians. We [the U.S. military] must understand the history of the relationship better so that we do not become hostage to the Indian interpretation of events.*



For example, Indians inevitably will mention the episode when the United States sent the USS Enterprise into the Bay of Bengal as a warning to the Indians in their 1971 war with Pakistan. Indians' frequent references to the past leave Americans with the impression that India still has not psychologically moved beyond this incident. [30]

## Visceral Hatred for Pakistanis

The majority of American interviewees, most of whom have interacted with Indians in the past year, remarked on Indians' visceral hatred and distrust of the Pakistanis. Americans see the Pakistani issue striking a deep emotional chord with Indians that regularly triggers an outpouring of animosity directed toward Pakistan, even from the most level-headed Indians. Several American military officers who are interacting with Indians for the first time expressed surprise at what they saw as single-minded focus on Pakistan. For example, two generals at PACOM described feeling "barraged with anti-Pakistan rhetoric." [31] Other interviewees observed that Indians raised the Pakistan issue at every meeting and every sidebar conversation. One general observed: "Pakistan is India's blind spot." These experiences leave Americans with two impressions of Indians. First, everything that India does is colored by its animosity toward Pakistan. Second, Indians attempt to persuade the Americans to distrust their archrival at every opportunity.

## Changed Atmospherics Perceived by Both Sides

The interviews also suggested that in some areas, these old perceptions may be breaking down. New features have been injected into the Indo-U.S. relationship that undermine and erode widely held perceptions on both sides. The Indian and American interviewees identified significant changes in the Indo-U.S. relationship since 1998 that have altered the tenor of the relationships, creating a new context for the military relationship that is measurably different from the context of the 1980s and mid-1990s, when the military relationship experienced a series of false starts. The character of the relationship changed even more dramatically after 9/11; this event created the context for significant progress in the military-to-military relationship.

In particular, the Indian interviewees admit that Indian views of the United States have become less strident and are infused with the reality of a new environment and dynamics in the relationship. The Indian military and policymakers seek to rise above the perceptions formed in the past and will draw increasingly on the experiences of the past couple of years as they move forward with the Indo-U.S. military relationship. This new reality offers hope and opportunity for setting a new reality or establishing a solid foundation for launching the relationship—a process that has been underway for the past 9 months.

One highly placed Indian policymaker described the changed atmosphere by contrasting it with the past—

*In the early 1990s, the two governments spoke elliptically and obliquely of a normalized relationship; but at the same time, both sides would go out their way to hector or criticize the other state in areas that were not critical to their security interests. In the past, the two governments would disagree in public and agree in private. Both sides kept the convergences out of sight. Today the two governments agree on issues in public and discuss differences in private.*

Several Indians cite India's lack of an official response to Bush's axis of evil concept, aimed at two of India's friends in the region (e.g., Iran and Iraq), as evidence of this changed dynamic.

American and Indian interviewees largely agreed on the factors that contributed to the changed atmospherics of the relationship. And they concurred that these factors gave the relationship a new impetus long before the terrorist attacks on 9/11. They credit several pivotal events/factors, including—

- **BJP Coming to Power**—American and Indian interviewees identify the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a crucial factor in creating the conditions for a new relationship. The Indians credit the BJP with injecting new confidence in the “Indian psyche.” The BJP pursued a deliberate policy to enhance India's power position in the world, for example, by conducting the nuclear tests in 1998, which raised India's profile in Washington and around the world. More important, Indians asserted that the BJP leadership's pragmatic approach to foreign policy has driven it to reshape India's relationship with the United States. American interviewees believe that this top-level commitment has given the Indian military more flexibility to pursue the relationship than in the past. [32] Moreover, the BJP's focus on economic reform requires closer economic ties with the United States as a source of foreign direct investment.
- **Talbott-Singh Dialogue**—Americans and Indians commented on the uniqueness and significance of the Talbott-Singh dialogue for creating a new atmosphere for the relationship. The dialogue represented the first time the two countries engaged in a sustained discussion on strategic issues. Not only did Mr. Strobe Talbott and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh develop a close personal relationship, but the dialogue also demonstrated that the two countries could listen to each other's concerns. The Indians and Americans jointly believe that the dialogue led Jaswant Singh to champion the Indo-U.S. relationship, despite real political costs. [33]
- **U.S. Response to Kargil**—Interviewees on both sides cite Kargil as a significant turning point in the relationship. For the Indians, the U.S. condemnation of Pakistani incursions across the LOC at Kargil and the U.S. pressure on

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif signified a dramatic shift in U.S. policy favoring the Indian position and recognizing Pakistan's culpability. Moreover, it demonstrated that U.S. actions in the region could clearly support Indian objectives. Indians and Americans marveled at how one event could have such a profound impact on changing perceptions after decades of distrust.

- **President Clinton's Visit to India in 2000**—Interviewees on both sides believe that the above-mentioned factors led to the “ground-breaking” Clinton visit to India. [34] Many Indian interviewees recalled the Indian political elite (and the general public) embracing President Clinton (literally and figuratively) when he showed sensitivities to Indian concerns in his landmark speech to India's parliament, the Lok Sabha. One American policymaker who has worked with Indians for many years described the astonishing scene of Indian parliamentarians clamoring to embrace President Clinton when he concluded his remarks—he had never witnessed such a response from Indians. More important, many Indians lauded the Vision Statement produced at the end of the trip for laying a new foundation for the Indo-U.S. relationship, even though notable asymmetries existed in some areas.
- **Influence of Indian Presence in United States**—American and Indians commented on the importance of the growing number of Indians in the United States. The number of Indians living, working, and studying in the United States rose markedly in the 1990s, driven largely by the high-tech boom. Consequently, Indian-Americans have become the most affluent and prosperous minority in the United States, with increasing political clout in Washington. Many Indian interviewees believe that the impact of this development is twofold. First, the growing personal connection between the Indian elite and the United States has begun to erode anti-American sentiments that were previously a staple of political discourse. [35] Second, beyond the close personal connection, the success of the Indian population in the United States and the growing numbers of Indians educated abroad have had a socializing effect that makes the power of the United States more palatable.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, a recurring theme emerged during interviews with the Indians—the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and the United States' rapid response to the terrorist threat in the region served as a catalyst for changing the way Indians think about Americans. In different ways, the Indian interviewees explained the outpouring of public empathy for the United States after the terrorist attacks. Many Indian interviewees observed that this empathy produced a perception that Americans understand India's problems with terrorism and many believe that U.S. activities in Afghanistan (and Pakistan) support Indian interests. One high-ranking Indian policymaker spoke enthusiastically about this “sea change” in the Indian mindset toward the United States. The Indian public accepts the United States as an actor in South Asia, which has enabled the Indian government to be more open about supporting the Americans.



Another Indian policymaker described the change in public sentiment toward the United States and Indian policy toward the United States by contrasting Indian support during the Gulf War with the recent support during Operation Enduring Freedom—

*In the early 1990s, India clandestinely supported the U.S. military buildup for the Gulf War to avoid public outcry; and as soon as Indian involvement became public, the support ceased. In response to the attacks on 9/11, India was among the first countries to offer material support to a U.S. military response. Later during Operation Enduring Freedom, Indian support (e.g., providing overflight access, docking, refueling) was fully reported to the public.*

In addition, several high-ranking Indian policymakers reported that the United States is doing more to consult India as a friend and to share information on issues of shared concern, such as the Russia-U.S. dialogue—a practice that began before the 9/11 attacks. One of these policymakers made it clear that this kind of “special treatment” pleases the Indians. [36]

Americans also detected the significant change in Indian attitudes toward the United States and believed that the new openness of New Delhi will likely facilitate the Indo-U.S. military relationship. Particularly, American interviewees who have worked with the Indians for years see a new pragmatism and activism in Indian actions that did not exist a decade ago. Many American interviewees point to a new generation of Indians climbing the ranks across all government institutions who want a strong India and will make decisions based on national interests, not ideology. Several American policymakers in Washington find their Indian counterparts in the MEA to be forward thinking and highly supportive of the Indo-U.S. military relationship. One policymaker made this observation—

*The U.S. Department of State has a much more comfortable relationship with the MEA than ever before. The MEA has a level of comfort with the United States, so they are allowing the military-to-military relationship to move forward. Moreover, the transparency among the MEA, MOD, and the Indian military services has increased dramatically.*

*No latent anti-Americanism exists among the “forward leaning” staff who are working to build the Indo-U.S. relationship (e.g., the Joint Secretary for the Americas). But we [the U.S. State Department] still find latent anti-Americanism in other mission areas, such as the UN mission, where the U.S. and Indian delegations have little rapport.*

American policymakers and military officers credit Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh for some of the changes in Indian attitudes toward the United States. One American policymaker’s observation reflected the thinking of many others in Washington and Hawaii—

*Despite all of the troubles working with the MEA in the past, Jaswant Singh is the most prominent and most vocal supporter of a broad and deep relationship with the United States. He believes that India needs to partner with the world's superpower.*

Some military officers at PACOM believe that the DPG has also given the Indian military the political cover they need in order to engage with more confidence than in the past. They explain that the MEA agreed to the Terms of Reference for the DPG framework, which provides the Indian Armed Services space to discuss the practical aspects of military-to-military cooperation without MEA interference (see Chapter 4 for further discussion of the civilian control of the military). [37]

American interviewees who deal with Indians regularly in Washington believe the Indian Embassy is becoming increasingly politically savvy, and they detect subtle but important changes in the way the Indian Embassy operates. One civilian action officer described the changes over the past year like this.

*The Indians appear to recognize that all the policy decisions are not made at the highest levels, but that most of the work is completed at the working staff levels. Under the new Indian Ambassador, the Embassy staff has made a concerted effort to reach out to people at all levels of the policymaking process. For example, the defense attaché hosted a party for all the working level staff in the Pentagon, which provided the Indians an opportunity to develop working relationships with a range of people contributing to building the Indo-U.S. relationship.*

Despite the changes that are transforming the relationship, an Indian brigadier marveled at a paradox that he sees—

*Each side believes that the other side needs the strategic relationship more than the other side. U.S. pride is rooted in its current glory as a superpower, and India's pride is rooted in its past glory as a vibrant and prosperous civilization. Without a deep understanding of each other, these two proud countries will not see eye-to-eye.*

## End Notes

22. In addition to commenting on the Indo-Soviet relationship, many Indian interviewees felt compelled to rebut American claims that India's UN voting record reflected an anti-American or pro-Soviet position, which they claimed is frequently cited by Americans as evidence of their alignment against the United States. The Indian interviewees argue that the asymmetry in UN voting records resulted more from different interests and different filters for evaluating and understanding events—India was using a non-alignment filter—not a deliberate anti-American strategy.

The interviews with the Americans confirm this observation. Approximately a quarter of the Americans, all of whom have been working on South Asia issues for many years, mentioned the asymmetry of the Indian and U.S. voting records at the UN. These interviewees observed that the asymmetry between the U.S. and Indian voting records is so large that it exceeds the asymmetry between the United States and pariah states, such as Syria or Libya.

23. Several Indian interviews expressed concerns that they hear this same kind of “black and white” rhetoric in President Bush’s speeches since he launched the war on terrorism, when he declared states to be either “for us or against us.” This kind of rhetoric raises new fears that Indian actions will be misunderstood in the future.
24. Indian military officers explain that India’s colonial legacy and specifically, the Indian military’s subordination to Whitehall during the British Raj make it impossible for the Indian military to be in any relationship that gives the appearance of taking orders from an outside power.
25. American military officers also assert that these agencies still label India as a proliferator, even though technically they have developed their capabilities indigenously and have not proliferated.
26. Among the Americans interacting with the Indians, the military officers at PACOM tended to be more tolerant than others of Indian idiosyncrasies and deficiencies because in comparing the Indian military with other militaries in Asia, the Indians were superior.
27. Policymakers in Washington who focus more on the economic dimension of the relationship warn of similar perceptions among U.S. businessmen. U.S. defense companies, as well as companies in other sectors, harbor deep-seated doubts about doing business in India. First, U.S. companies find it difficult and costly to navigate the cumbersome process of signing a contract; second, they are never confident that Indians will honor the contract after it is signed.
28. According to this interviewee, only pre-expansion NATO countries with a Navy and Australia have navies capable of conducting this maneuver.
29. This general led the Army ESG before he officially moved into this new position because it did not make sense for his predecessor, who was a lame duck, to launch a new relationship. Consequently, he traveled to India before his official promotion, which raised questions among the Indians. But he explained to them that it was important for him to attend because he would have a vested interest in building the relationship.
30. Several Indian interviewees mentioned that Indians never let Americans forget the USS Enterprise incident in 1971. But they emphasized that in a symbolic gesture, the Navy ESG was held on the U.S. Blue Ridge command ship to signify a change in Indian thinking, overcoming past obstacles.
31. Both of these generals were also struck by the fact that the Indians view the December 13 terrorist attack of their parliament on a par with the September 11 attacks.



32. A colonel at PACOM described how the MEA exercised more influence over the military in the past. He recalled a meeting only a couple of years ago when ADM Dennis Blair, USCINCPAC, could not hand his business card directly to his military counterpart. Rather, he was required to pass it to the MEA official for review, who then passed it to the MOD official for review, who finally passed it to the Indian general. During the same interview, a major explained that as recently as summer 2001, the MEA had become indignant and angry when the National Defense University sent conference materials directly to India's National War College—as opposed to through MEA first.
33. Indian and American interviewees speculated that Jaswant Singh lost the Ministry of Defense portfolio after the United States did not respond to India's offer to provide unprecedented support after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Many Indians explained that Jaswant Singh was seen as too close to the Americans.
34. Both Indian and American interviewees used the word “ground-breaking” to describe the visit to India and what Clinton accomplished there.
35. American interviewees in the U.S. Embassy in Delhi observed that just about every member of the Indian elite has at least one family member either studying or working in the United States.
36. The Indian policymaker indicated that this information sharing is symbolically important because the U.S. Government only shares this type of information with 5–6 other “friends.”
37. A South Asia FAO explained that the DPG TOR involved a compromise in which the MEA oversees the Joint Technical Group and the Security Assistance Group to deal with the technology issues in return for granting the Indian military more freedom and flexibility in the Executive Steering Groups.

# Military Cooperation: Objectives, Priorities, and Approaches

This section explores the American and Indian objectives, priorities, and expectations, as described by the interviewees, as the two militaries embark on building a military relationship. It also examines the different perceptions of the weight and significance of different components of military cooperation and the approaches for building a relationship. The interviews suggest that the Indians and the Americans have different ideas about what the ultimate objective of a military-to-military relationship should be and how to achieve that objective. The Americans focused on building a relationship slowly and incrementally that will enable India to be a strategic partner—in a strategic location—in the future. In contrast, the Indians asserted that the nascent relationship, even though it will develop slowly, must move rapidly to produce tangible results and benefits, particularly regarding technology transfer. Despite the different foci and priorities, all interviewees expressed some degree of optimism and enthusiasm about the myriad meetings, visits, and activities that have transformed the Indo-U.S. relationship over the past 12 months. This section seeks to illuminate the thinking on both sides as the two militaries proceed down the pathways laid out by the DPG and ESGs and to foster a deeper understanding as to what is driving the objectives and approaches to military cooperation on both sides.

## What Does the U.S. Military Want?

All American military officers interviewed for this project view building a military relationship with India as a long-term process and an important investment, and many of them underscored the importance of starting to build a relationship now if the United States hopes to rely on India as a strategic partner in the future. They stressed that the relationship will evolve slowly largely because the two militaries have so little past experience of cooperation and little understanding of each other's capabilities, doctrine, and tactics. One interviewee likened military cooperation with India to the opening of Eastern Europe in the early 1990s. The relationship must start nearly from scratch. Several American military officers commented that despite several attempts to launch a military-to-military relationship in the 1980s and early 1990s, the Indo-U.S. military relationship has had few, if any, success stories on which to base the relation-

ship. To the contrary, past experiences with Indians have frustrated the participants and fueled negative impressions on both sides. One South Asia FAO observed—

*We [Americans and Indians] need to write a new history of U.S.-India relations by building a new foundation for the relationship. It will be a difficult relationship and there will be disagreements. But we need a foundation of successes, which can become the point of reference when we run into problems in the future. We need to be able to fall back on positive impressions, not negative impressions, even when we disagree on issues.*

This foundation of positive impressions is a first step toward the U.S. military's two primary long-term objectives in building a military relationship with the Indians. American military officers uniformly hope the relationship will help India develop into a competent partner in Asia while providing the U.S. military with access to critical infrastructure in a strategic location.

## India—A New, Competent Partner in Asia

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The U.S. military seeks a competent military partner that can take on more responsibility for low-end operations in Asia, such as peacekeeping operations (PKO), search and rescue (SR), humanitarian assistance (HA), disaster relief (DR), and high-value cargo escort, which will allow the U.S. military to concentrate its resources on high-end fighting missions. A high-ranking American military officer expressed this widely held view—

*We [U.S. military] seek India's active support in promoting shared interests in Asia, such as ensuring peace and stability, promoting economic growth, and preventing/managing the failure of states. The U.S. burden in the region is lifted if a major regional power can respond to crises by taking a lead role in peacekeeping, search and rescue, and disaster relief missions in the region. We must help the Indian military develop its capabilities so that we have confidence that they will be both willing and able to provide this kind of support.*

From a PACOM perspective, the Indian military is an ideal partner in these low-end missions because of their relatively sophisticated military capability; their proximity to potentially unstable areas; and most important, their past experience, especially PKO. The following comments from PACOM personnel were typical—

*The Indian military is eager to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. Their officers receive high pay and high prestige when they participate. Moreover, India's own ethnic diversity makes them more sensitive to ethnic issues and differences than the U.S. military. Indians are highly qualified not only to participate in PKO*



*but to provide training seminars for other militaries, particularly from the West, that are increasingly involved with PKOs.*

*The Indians are much better at PKO and humanitarian missions than the U.S. military. They need to do more. We [the U.S. military] benefit if we help make the Indian military more effective and capable at performing these missions.*

*The U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) is looking for partners in humanitarian and disaster relief operations. India has had its own problems, but it also has valuable experience dealing with crises in Third World environments. Our [USARPAC] ultimate goal is to be able to work together with the Indians to respond to regional crises, particularly in Africa. We [India and the United States] should be seen as partners in restoring order and promoting democracy in the region.*

For American interviewees, the Indian Navy's assistance in escorting high value assets in the Strait of Malacca, which began in spring 2002, signals that the Indians are prepared to assume this kind of responsibility. One American colonel observed—

*This mission is the first time that the Indian military is joining a coalition mission that is not under UN auspices, suggesting that the influences of India's Non-Aligned Movement are starting to fade. India is starting to join the world and becoming more comfortable cooperating with the Americans.*

## Access to Indian Military Infrastructure

American military officers are candid in their plans to eventually seek access to Indian bases and military infrastructure. India's strategic location in the center of Asia, astride the frequently travelled SLOCs linking the Middle East and East Asia, makes India particularly attractive to the U.S. military. Two American Lt. generals observed—

*Access to India would enable the U.S. military "to be able to touch the rest of the world" and to respond rapidly to regional crises.*

*The Air Force would benefit from having access closer to areas of instability (e.g., Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf). India's well-developed infrastructure could be useful for U.S. power projection into these areas.*

Many American military planners are thinking about different sets of allies and friends for addressing a future strategic environment in Asia that may be dramatically different from today. For many, India is the most attractive alternative. For this reason, several Americans underscored that eventual access to Indian military infrastruc-

ture represents a critical “strategic hedge” against dramatic changes in traditional U.S. relationships in Asia. One South Asia FAO echoed the sentiments of others—

*India’s strategic importance increases in the event that U.S. relationships with other traditional allies (e.g., Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia) become more acrimonious or politically uncomfortable for both parties; or if access rights that the United States takes for granted become more restrictive; or if our traditional relationships collapse resulting in a U.S. military withdrawal. The United States needs to develop alternatives in Asia—India is the optimal choice if we can overcome the obstacles in building the relationship.*

An American colonel described the “ideal situation”—

*The U.S. Navy wants a relatively neutral territory on the opposite side of the world that can provide ports and support for operations in the Middle East. India not only has a good infrastructure, the Indian Navy has proved that it can fix and fuel U.S. ships. Over time, port visits must become a natural event. India is a viable player in supporting all naval missions, including escorting and responding to regional crises. In the same vein, the U.S. Air Force would like the Indians to be able to grant them access to bases and landing rights during operations, such as counter terrorism and heavy airlift support.*

In addition, a common theme among high-ranking American officers is that the U.S. military would benefit from training with Indians, particularly if training could occur on Indian territory. One American general observed “India provides an opportunity to train in a variety of environments from the desert to the jungle to high altitude.” A civilian at PACOM asserted that with military training ranges shrinking and becoming increasingly controversial in the United States, joint training operations with the Indians could help augment the U.S. training requirements. From a naval perspective, an American admiral also observed that the U.S. Navy would benefit from becoming proficient in the Indian Ocean region, which can be done only by training with the Indians.

All Americans agreed that this process would take time. [38]

## A More Robust Strategic Dialogue

A number of American interviewees who have worked closely with Indians complain about their inability to “think strategically.” In general, American military officers and policymakers in Washington hold high expectations that their interactions with the Indian military experts will produce a fruitful two-way strategic dialogue, but they argue that this has not yet happened. Their frustration with the Indians’ unwillingness to be an active participant in an exchange of ideas emerged at a number of levels in the interviews. For example, several American policymakers

complained that the Indian briefings presented at recent fora—the DPG and ESGs—were “elementary and pedestrian,” lacking any elaboration on Indian strategies, or focusing completely on Pakistan. Other American military officers commented after hearing an Indian briefing on the structure of the Indian military’s new Integrated Defense Staff (IDS) that the American briefings on the same topic provided a more comprehensive picture of the IDS than the Indian briefing.

The interviews reveal a strong Washington/PACOM divide on this issue. In contrast to Washington, the interviewees at PACOM are extremely impressed by the Indians, whom they describe as among the most sophisticated militaries in PACOM’s AOR with respect to both military capabilities and strategic thinking. In contrast to Washington policymakers, most PACOM military officers who participated in the ESGs were pleased rather than disappointed with the quality of their discussions with the Indians.

The Indian military’s voice in strategic decisionmaking has historically been muted or repressed, which may explain some of the reluctance of senior Indian officers from engaging in the kind of “strategic” analysis—at least in public—that their American counterparts feel no reluctance to undertake. A respected American strategist who has worked with Indians for decades noted that Indian officers suffer from the lack of basic “strategic skills”—

*Indian military officers lack the training to conduct rigorous cost/benefit analysis required to understand the implications of their military operations, or to guide their budget/resources decisions. For example, instead of analyzing the costs, trade-offs, and strategic implications of building a fleet of nuclear submarines, the Indians fall back on Cold War arguments and canards to justify their decision. They have yet to produce rigorous cost-benefit analysis to support the requirement for nuclear submarines.*

He attributed this lack of analytical skills to the insular nature of the military in which the officers have limited exposure to the outside world and little academic training in subjects required for strategy (e.g., geopolitics, military history, and patterns of organization).

## What Does the Indian Military Want?

The Indian interviewees also acknowledge that building a robust military relationship will be a slow, long-term process, punctuated with disagreements and bumps, after decades of estrangement. One retired Indian admiral observed—

*We [the Indian and U.S. militaries] don’t share equipment. We don’t understand one another’s tactics and operational concepts. We don’t speak the same military*



*language. We have a lot of work to do to overcome existing suspicions and apprehensions that result from a lack of chemistry and experience working together.*

More than Americans, however, Indian interviewees placed the Indo-U.S. military relationship into a broader context of a multifaceted Indo-U.S. strategic relationship. Their long-term objectives for an Indo-U.S. military relationship differ from the U.S. objectives in two ways—

1. They reflect India's subordinate position—that they are on the receiving end of the relationship.
2. They reflect a different set of expectations about the ways a military relationship will transform the larger strategic relationship.

## Increased U.S. Investment in the Indian Defense Sector

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Many Indians believe that the centerpiece of any military relationship will be economic—only economic interests lay the foundation for a strong, stable, and enduring U.S. commitment to the relationship. Several Indian interviewees described the “defense industry/defense supply” relationship as the center of gravity from which many opportunities for collaboration emanate, such as space cooperation; co-development; and cooperative research and development, and science and technology.

In addition, the Indians are looking to the United States to help fuel economic growth in India with increased foreign investment. Most Indian interviewees (civilian and military) expect the military relationship to translate into broader and deeper economic ties (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of the economic component of the relationship).

## Technology Transfer: Military Cooperation's Touchstone

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### The Indian View

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Nearly all Indian interviewees viewed technology transfer as an important component, if not the essential component, of a closer U.S.-India military relationship. Indians' concerns about husbanding and applying technology arise from India's historical experience of repeatedly being defeated by foreign invaders with superior technology. Indians refuse to repeat this lesson of history. Consequently, one cannot overstate the sincerity and occasional vehemence with which Indian military and non-military authorities at all levels advance the case for technology transfer's centrality in both near- and long-term military cooperation strategies. The necessity of the United States' adopting a more liberal, less restrictive technology transfer regimen toward India—and for the United States not to impede the transfer to India of critical

military equipment and militarily-relevant technologies from third parties, Israel for example—emerged from the interviews with Indians in virtually every context. While the Americans viewed Indian demands for more access to U.S. technology as a kind of boring mantra, Indians see it as an issue of many parts and relevant to a wide range of different practical and symbolic security contexts. Many Indians mentioned the Americans' reluctance to engage in focused technology transfer as a potential "deal killer" in the effort to construct an enduring strategic relationship.

For Indians, technology transfer from the United States is military cooperation's touchstone. The message from the Indians at all levels was nearly uniform: Technology transfer must be the engine of the relationship and the "acid test" of U.S. commitment. Everything else revolves around a strong U.S. commitment to share its technologies so that India can advance. [39]

First, for Indians, technology transfer will confirm that the Americans understand India's growing strategic importance as a regional and global actor; that they are prepared to think of India as a strategic partner and participant across a range of converging interests; and that they are prepared to help India—with technology—to lift its share of the load. For example, a retired admiral reasoned that the U.S. Navy would benefit directly from technology transfer to India because it would enable India to extend its patrolling capability further outside of its EEZ, making the Indian Navy a more capable and robust partner and an asset to U.S. interests.

The interviews suggest that American policymakers and military officers believe that a program of service-level cooperation will build trust and confidence between the two militaries, which will ultimately lead to technology transfer aimed at making the Indian military a more capable partner in Asia. For most American interviewees, technology transfer is viewed as the product of a long process of building a transparent military-to-military relationship.

Indian priorities are reversed. The Indians want some of the technological rewards of a strategic relationship upfront as a signal that the Americans are serious. They do not want to endure 3 to 5 years of service-level cooperation before they reap the real benefits of cooperation—technology transfer—for three reasons. First, they do not believe the United States is a reliable partner or supplier; consequently, they operate with the assumption that the relationship probably never will reach the desired endpoint of cooperation if they quietly accept the Americans' engagement model and timetable. The Indians want the United States committed by tying it down politically and economically with technology transfer deals. A highly placed brigadier used a metaphor to contrast the two approaches—

*An American male wants to get married but he does not see any reason to open a joint checking account until after the wedding. He is uncomfortable with that level of commitment until he is absolutely sure the relationship will be consummated. An Indian woman, on the other hand, insists on opening a joint checking account*

*before getting married because she wants proof that her lover is absolutely committed to the relationship before she can make a decision about marriage.*

Two Indian policymakers summarized different aspects of this view—

*Technology is not important for the sake of technology but as a symbol of the U.S. mindset and acceptance of the military relationship. If the United States is willing to accept the risks of giving India technology, it means that the United States accepts India's role in the region as source of stability that supports U.S. interests.*

*The real barometer of the U.S. mindset will be access to dual use technology. If the United States is willing to share dual use technologies, then it suggests that the United States regards India as a partner that shares strategic concerns and burdens. If the United States denies access to dual use technology, then it gives the impression that India is not accepted or trusted.*

Second, technology transfer signals that Americans are ready to treat India as a preferred friend, not as a suspect former ally of the Soviet Union—a characterization most Indian officers qualify or reject—or as some kind of rogue regime deserving sanctions for simply exercising the kind of national security prudence that America overlooks among its allies. According to a retired brigadier—

*An equal partnership means that India is treated the same way that the U.S. Government treats other U.S. allies, particularly when it comes to technology transfer. For example, India should be subject to the same technology restrictions as Turkey, Greece, or Israel. This means that the United States must rescind the sanction regime that was put in place after the 1974 nuclear tests. The remnants of this sanction regime make the Indians feel like outcasts in the U.S. universe. When the United States treats India like a "Brahmin" and not an "outcast," then India will be more amenable to an open relationship. Outcasts are different from competitors. The United States needs universal treatment for its friends. [40]*

Third, Indians believe that technology transfer will lead to their ultimate objective of connecting the Indian and American DIBs in ways that will promote joint development and eventually prompt U.S. companies to invest in India's DIB. This, they believe, will create important political constituencies in both countries dedicated to strengthening the strategic relationship. A retired air commodore, who participated in early talks between the Indians and Americans in the early 1990s, described the importance of the links between the DIBs as the relationship's "center of gravity"—

*The centerpiece of the relationship must be building DIB cooperation, which will lay the foundation for a larger relationship by linking the military and economic relationship. The center of gravity, therefore, will be the defense industry, not the service-to-service ties. The defense industry offers innumerable opportunities, par-*



particularly with the opening of the Indian DIB to foreigners, such as space cooperation, co-development, and joint science and technology projects.

In this sense, Indians see technology transfer as a means of “enabling” India to develop indigenous capabilities while simultaneously promoting interoperability. [41] One Indian brigadier explained—

*The Indians want to be enabled to stand on their own by developing indigenous capabilities. For example, the United States played an integral role in enabling India to feed itself by introducing Green Revolution technologies that allowed India to increase its food production indigenously. Today in a security context, the United States can enable India to protect itself by providing sensor technology that the Indian military can use to monitor and trace Pakistani activities along the LOC.*

Indians explicitly linked technology cooperation (or technology transfer) to success at other levels of military cooperation (e.g., service-to-service cooperation and strategic dialogue). One retired lt. general expressed this widely held view—

*Service-to-service cooperation might reach a dead end if the Indian MOD faces roadblocks on its requests for items on the Munitions List (ML). The Indians want something concrete in return for their many trips to Hawaii. The Indians want to see results. The MEA will be watching how the U.S. State Department approaches the ML items for India. The slow approval process will not be a problem in the immediate short-term because both political systems are working through a backlog that has been sitting in the system for years. But problems might become apparent when new requests are made.*

As noted above, one cannot overstate the intensity with which Indians put technology transfer and technology cooperation at the center of the Indo-U.S. relationship that they would like to emerge. That said, Indian thinking on technology transfer, as on many other issues, is often contradictory. For example, several interviewees doubted America’s reliability as a supplier; and they fear that building a dependence on the United States could make the Indian military vulnerable to U.S. sanctions or other politically driven defense supply disruptions. These voices usually argue that technology transfer is only necessary to permit India to eventually build indigenous capabilities sufficient to insulate it from the unpredictability of U.S. politics.

Another reservation, articulated by several retired Indian generals, is that technology may undermine the fighting spirit of the Indian soldier. One retired lt. general explained these concerns, which seem to exist primarily in the Indian Army—

*As a manpower rich military, the Indian Army’s strength is based on a strong “infantry ethos.” Indian soldiers will follow their leaders anywhere and the Army*

*leadership worries that the integration of new technology might erode this ethos if the soldier is empowered in new ways.*

At the same time, Indian military officers concede that the military cannot stop technology from changing the way they conduct war. For example, their problems during the recent Kargil operation demonstrated their need to be able to conduct war at night. This conclusion is driving the Army's requests to the United States for night vision equipment, thermal imagery, and helicopters capable of flying at night. Yet cautionary voices among them warn that high-tech systems cannot be integrated with existing Indian systems easily and will require significant changes to the military's current doctrine and organizational structure. These Indians describe the military as "confused about what it needs" and unprepared for the challenges that will result from attempting to integrate the systems they seek to obtain. A retired Indian air commodore notes for example that—

*The Indian Air Force would like access to an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), which it considers a potent force multiplier. But many years and considerable resources are required to integrate an AWACS into IAF operations.*

A tiny minority of Indian interviewees argued that India does not need U.S. technology at all, and in some ways it would be better off without it. This minority view claims that India can obtain the capabilities that the military needs from what they consider to be more reliable sources, including Russia, France, Israel, and Germany; or India will develop the capabilities that they need indigenously. Although they admit U.S. assistance would accelerate the process of modernizing Indian military capabilities, it is not essential, or even desirable. In fact, this small handful of Indians claim that the lack of access to U.S. technology has been advantageous because deprivation has forced Indians to innovate on their own. According to a retired lt. general—

*Indian interests in building a relationship with the United States are not only about technology. In fact, India has managed well over the years without U.S. technology. Sanctions have not hindered Indian development. Instead, they have given Indians confidence in their own abilities.*

## The American View

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Americans, like their Indian counterparts, believe technology transfer plays a central role in the military relationship for the Indians, but most of the American interviewees appear to misunderstand why technology transfer is so important to the Indians. The contrast is striking.

Americans at all levels firmly believe that Indians' sole interest in the relationship is gaining access to U.S. technology because—

*The Indian military cannot obtain specific capabilities from other sources. Only the United States provides the capabilities that the Indians need, such as sophisticated enabling technologies to enhance their own systems.*

*The Indian military is feeling its own weakness, especially after witnessing the U.S. capabilities in Afghanistan. Indian air power and C2 are so limited that the IAF was surprised by capabilities that the U.S. military takes for granted, such as airlift capacity.*

*The Indians recognize that U.S. equipment is quantitatively and qualitatively better than any other military in the world, as demonstrated in the Gulf War and Afghanistan.*

*The Indians are unhappy with the quality of the Russian equipment and have experienced problems in their deal with Israel and France. The United States is the preferred alternative.*

*The Indians are only interested in U.S. technology to gain leverage in negotiations with other suppliers.*

*Indians are smart and talented people. They want U.S. technology, so they can build it themselves.*

Except for American interviewees who had served in India or had extended direct experience with Indians, none of the American interviewees mentioned the symbolism of technology transfer that dominates the Indian view of the relationship. The few Americans who understand this Indian preoccupation held views not unlike the Indian interviewees. For example, an American colonel who has spent several years in India called technology transfer India's "litmus test" for the Indo-U.S. relationship. Another interviewee who works with foreign military sales referred to his India FMS program as "not a typical sale but a symbol of the relationship." Both of these interviewees and two other Americans warned that the Indians will be watching for a systemic change in the way India is treated by the U.S. export control and licensing system. All worry that the United States will ultimately disappoint India because the barriers inherent in the U.S. system will likely keep technology transfers from being as fluid or frequent as Indians expect or desire. They warned of growing expectations on the Indian side, particularly with the signing of the GSOMIA in January 2002, which put to rest the final procedural barrier impeding the transfer process on the American side. GSOMIA, according to these Americans, can no longer be used as an excuse for inaction. One American colonel who interacts regularly with the Indians described the problem like this—

*Now that they [the Indians] have signed the GSOMIA, the United States can no longer stand behind it as a reason for denying sales to India. The Indians will be*



*looking for a systemic change in the way they are treated by the U.S. system as an indication that the United States is willing to trust them.*

## A Partnership of Equals

All Indian interviewees warned that only a military-to-military relationship based on equality would be acceptable to Indian leadership. They expect “an adult-to-adult” relationship, not a “patron-client” or a “parent-child” relationship. They claim that Indian public opinion would never accept either of the last two. Several Indian military officers attributed the Indian military’s heightened sensitivity to equality to India’s colonial legacy and specifically to the Indian military’s subordination to Whitehall during the British Raj. [42] Other interviewees believe that Indians demand an equal partnership because they fear that being a junior partner might limit India’s freedom of action, and no Indian leadership will accept any real or perceived infringement of India’s sovereignty. Underlying the last concern, one high-ranking Indian military officer contrasted Indian expectations for a relationship with the United States to the expectations of the United States from other U.S. allies—

*Indians tend to carry a chip on their shoulder—we want to be an equal partner. As a large state, we do not see ourselves as a junior partner. We believe that we have done well without the United States, so why would we tolerate a subordinate position now? Our expectations differ from the Europeans who expect the United States to be a “big brother.” In NATO, all members understand and accept the inequality of the relationship.*

The Indians expect equal treatment in four areas—

1. the “norms” that govern interactions between two sovereign states;
2. U.S. technology transfer policy that treats India as a friend;
3. a symbiotic relationship that connects the Indian military with the infrastructure on the continental United States (CONUS); and
4. sensitivity to Indian policy concerns and interests, and increased consultations in policymaking in the regions where the United States and India share interests.

First, Indian interviewees conveyed forcefully that their U.S. counterparts should uphold “basic norms” of protocol between two sovereign states. By this they mean that Indian officials should be accorded the same treatment and respect that U.S. officials receive in India. For example, a retired Indian major general explained the Indian view of equality with a metaphor that reflected the recurring theme of equal treatment throughout the interviews—

*If two kings—one from a small kingdom and one from a large kingdom—seek to build a relationship, both kings expect the same type of treatment from each other. They expect the same type of royal protocol. They expect both sides to demonstrate commitment to the relationship. They expect the other party to be sensitive to his interests and compulsions. And both kings expect to obtain something from the relationship.*

A highly placed brigadier believes the most significant underlying driver of the success or failure of the relationship is “reciprocity.” But he currently sees an “asymmetry of access” in the relationship in which the Americans are receiving greater access to Indian officials in Delhi than Indians are receiving with Americans in Washington. He worries that if the perception of the Americans limiting access to high-level decisionmakers persists, eventually the Indian government will reciprocate by limiting access to its decisionmakers—a cycle that could slowly strangle the relationship before it develops a solid foundation because it gives the appearance of a patron-client arrangement. For him, the relationship must move toward a cycle of positive reciprocity of broadening and deepening access if it is to succeed.

Second, Indian policymakers expect a partnership based on equality to produce what they refer to as a “normal” relationship in which India is treated as a “friend.” [43] As discussed in the previous section, being treated as a “friend,” in the eyes of the Indians and some Americans, will entail a change in U.S. technology transfer policy. One high-level policymaker echoed the concerns of many—

*India wants a “normal relationship” that is not hostage to other factors. Any self-respecting country wants relationships that are not underpinned with suspicion. We want the normal relationship to develop into a robust economic, science and technology relationship.*

A highly placed brigadier explains that sharing dual use technology is the ultimate signal of a normal relationship with the United States—

*The greatest barometer of the Indo-U.S. relationship will be access to dual use technology. If the United States is willing to share dual use technology, then the United States signals its acceptance of India as a partner and a friend. If the United States fails to allow access to dual use technology, Indians are left with the impression of not being totally accepted or trusted by the Americans.*

Third, many Indian military officers characterize a partnership of equals as “symbiotic.” They observe that the success of the relationship depends on both sides benefiting from the relationship. Indians understand that PACOM seeks to build ties with the Indian military through joint and multinational exercises, and joint training exercises as a means to enable the two militaries to operate together, and they welcome these opportunities. But at the same time, many Indian military officers spoke of wanting to be connected to the CONUS-based infrastructure. As described by one highly placed Indian brigadier—

*In order for the military-to-military relationship to be “symbiotic,” the Indians want to be connected with CONUS infrastructure. This means that the Indian Army does not only want to interact with a special operations unit in Honolulu; it wants to learn about U.S. infrastructure and training that supports U.S. special operations and delta forces. Thus the Indian Army seeks to interact with the Special Operations Command. The Indian Army seeks not only to train with operational units at USARPAC, but it also wants to understand the U.S. Army’s training infrastructure. Thus in terms of training, the Indian Army is focused on the Army Headquarters and the Training and Doctrine Command.*

Fourth, a partnership of equality requires American policymakers to be more sensitive to India’s concerns and interests in its “extended security horizon.” Indian policymakers expect increasingly open communication and transparency in developing security policy in regions of shared concern that have a direct or indirect impact on India’s security interests. A retired Indian Lt. general characterized this requirement as an integral component to developing a military relationship.

*Indians understand that the United States has sustained interests in the regions that are part of India’s extended security horizon and that it will act to protect them. But as an equal partner, we expect increased consultation about U.S. objectives and intentions in these areas. Without consultation, we cannot identify areas of convergence and work jointly with the United States to maintain peace and security in the region.*

In this vein, numerous Indian policymakers and military officers complained about the lack of communication and consultation in fall 2001 when the United States embarked on its war on terrorism in India’s backyard. They do not want what they perceived to be grave and inexplicable failures to communicate repeated. For the Indians, particularly the Indian military, increased transparency is essential in building the Indo-U.S. military relationship because it enables them to preempt and deflect the inevitable political and public criticisms that India is becoming a client state of the United States.

Moreover, the Indians feel that Americans will benefit from increased consultations with them, particularly about developments in the Indian Ocean Basin—a region that they believe they understand much better than their American counterparts. For example, in the war on terrorism, some Indians believe that they could offer insights about events in the Indian Ocean Basin if their American counterparts were to consult them. One retired Indian Lt. general observed—

*The Indian Ocean Basin is predominately a non-Christian area inhabited by Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and other religions. In this environment, the United States is seen as an outside power. We [the Indians] understand this region and could be particularly helpful to the United States in turbulent places, particularly Afghanistan and Indonesia. We are watching Al Qaeda shift its bases from*



*Afghanistan/Pakistan to Indonesia. There are pockets of fundamentalists sprouting up all around the Indian Ocean Basin.*

In addition, Indian policymakers want American policymakers to be more sensitive to Indian national security interests and perceived threats. One prominent Indian policymaker echoed the sentiments of many Indians when he explained—

*We [the Indian Government] want the United States to understand and appreciate India's concerns. For example, we feel that the United States does not understand the threats posed by the Chinese transfer of technologies to Pakistan. From our perspective, the United States persistently turns a blind eye, and as a result it exerts little pressure on China. Americans may not consider the Pakistan-China nexus a real threat to the United States, but the consequences of Chinese actions pose a threat to the region, not just India.*

In the opinion of most Indians, however, being more understanding and sensitive to India's concerns does not necessarily translate into an active U.S. role assisting India in addressing them. To the contrary, many Indian military interviewees indicated that they clearly do not (and will not) count on U.S. military assistance in dealing with India's two major security concerns: China and Pakistan. Indian military officers repeatedly asserted that they must face these two threats alone. For the Indians, the Indo-U.S. military relationship should support their interests indirectly by providing access to military capabilities or by exerting political pressure on Pakistani leaders, but no more.

Nearly all Indian interviewees went out of their way to warn against U.S. interference in their relationship with China. "India will fight its own battles with China," was a constant refrain. But many then added that in order to be prepared to defend itself against China, India seeks to develop or acquire the necessary military capabilities. A retired Lt. general attributed this widely held view to India's past experience with China—

*India learned from its experience in 1962 that it must develop the capability to defend itself from China without having to fall back on other powers for support. Even as India and China improve their relations, India must develop the capabilities and strategies to counter strategic and tactical threats from China.*

The Indian interviewees identified three areas in which U.S. assistance would support Indian interests vis-à-vis China—

1. provide technologies and military capabilities to counter a potential Chinese threat, particularly naval capabilities;
2. pressure China to cease its proliferation of nuclear and missile technology, and its technical assistance to Pakistan; and

3. increase U.S. direct investment in India to help bolster India's economic growth (see Chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of China as an area of strategic convergence and divergence in the relationship).

In what many Americans see as a contradiction, at the same time the Indians insist on equality, they believe that the U.S. military carries the responsibility for pushing the relationship forward. The Indian military officers harbor no illusions of bringing equal capabilities to the relationship. In fact, numerous retired and acting military officers believe that the onus of moving the relationship forward lies with the U.S. military because the Americans are the senior partner, bring most of the capabilities to the table, and have decades of experience with military cooperation. A retired major general conveyed this thinking—

*The initiatives to move the relationship forward must come from the United States. As senior partner, the U.S. military carries more responsibility and more burdens to make the relationship work. India finds itself on the receiving end of the relationship, seeking economic aid, requesting technology transfer, and lobbying for the lifting of sanctions. We believe that only the United States has the power to resolve the issues that plague the relationship.*

When pressed on this apparent contradiction between demanding equality, when no equality in capability exists, and expecting the U.S. military to lead, even when the Indian military cannot tolerate an outside power setting the agenda, the Indians see no contradiction. For the Indians, equality comes more from how they are treated (as discussed earlier) than what should be expected of them.

For the Indian interviewees, all actions required to push the relationship forward (e.g., treating India an equal partner, giving India access to technology, building a robust economic relationship) rest on American shoulders, not the Indians'. And these issues are important in maintaining the momentum in the relationship by giving the Indian military the political space that it needs to follow the lead of the U.S. military.

## The Military Cooperation Process: What Comes First?

Indian and American interviewees generally agree that the new starting points for cooperation—the DPG, service ESGs and other working groups—have been successful. All interviewees believe that reconvening the DPG in December 2001 signified an important step toward building confidence at the political and military levels on both sides, and that its success has paved the way for service-level ESG meetings, which have proposed engagement agendas with ambitious programs of information exchange, joint training, exchanges, and exercises. Few interviewees on either side

questioned the success of the first round of ESG meetings that took place in January and February 2002.

The two militaries, however, appear to have very different ideas about what should come next and how to define success.

Many Americans observed that the relationship must start with “baby steps” or a “crawl” before it can move forward rapidly. The American interviewees believe that building trust, opening communications, and enhancing transparency comes only from increased interaction at the service level, which some Americans referred to as CBMs. The DPG process—through the service ESGs—has launched a range of service-to-service activities to foster understanding and build trust at different levels in the two militaries—

- Regular high-level visits to build personal relationships and enhance understanding of both sides’ policymaking process and policy concerns. Many military officers believe that the relationship needs more sharing of ideas and views about the strategic environment and about the threats and opportunities in this environment.
- Educational exchanges to provide opportunities for officers of both countries to establish career-long relationships and to learn one another’s operational concepts and doctrine.
- Joint training and exercises to identify one another’s strengths and weaknesses and to develop an affinity for one another at different levels of an operational unit.

The American military officers, particularly the operators at PACOM, spoke in depth about the initial steps of military cooperation. For them, joint and multilateral exercises, training, and exchanges represent an integral component of a military-to-military relationship because they are necessary to build goodwill and trust, but most important, to create transparency between the two militaries. This includes opening and expanding communications with the Indian military services in order to understand their operations and to establish communication links that could be used to respond jointly to a crisis. Americans and Indians agree on the areas most conducive to military-to-military cooperation—high-altitude and jungle warfare training, joint operations, and search and rescue exercises.

Several Americans also used dating analogies to describe the relationship. One American colonel referred to the Indo-U.S. military relationship as a “blind date,” underscoring the fact that the two militaries know so little about each other. They must go through the difficult and awkward process of becoming acquainted, learning the other’s idiosyncrasies and preferences, and building trust. For these Americans, service-to-service activities represent the beginning of a long, slow process that eventually will lead to a “consummated” relationship in which the two militaries operate



together. Real technology transfer will flow only after the relationship has been firmly established through the service-to-service cooperation.

In contrast, these activities are not as important to the Indians. In fact, the majority of the acting and retired Indian military officers questioned the impact of “low-level service-to-service cooperation” on the long-term development of the relationship. They do not believe that service-to-service cooperation demonstrates the U.S. commitment required to elevate the relationship to the next level. The following comments from acting and retired Indian military officers are typical—

*The Indian military’s ability to push the Indo-U.S. relationship to new heights is limited without parallel tracks of political and economic engagement.*

*Low-level service-to-service engagement does little to demonstrate the United States’ long-term commitment to the relationship. How does this low-level cooperation differ from activities in the early 1990s and how will it build the Indo-U.S. relationship?*

One retired air commodore worried about the adverse impact of service-to-service cooperation if the Indian military is perceived to be moving faster than their political bureaucracy—

*Service-to-service cooperation as a means to build trust between the two countries must be approached carefully. In the past, service-to-service cooperation fomented anti-American sentiments and skepticism at the subterranean levels of the Indian MOD.*

A majority of Indian interviewees believe, as described in previous sections, that only a “defense supply” relationship that includes the transfer of U.S. technology to India—as opposed to the service-to-service cooperation—will demonstrate sufficient U.S. commitment to sustain the relationship. Many retired and acting Indian military officers believe that the process of service-to-service cooperation must run in parallel with technology transfer—if one track shows little progress, the other track will stall. A senior Indian naval officer described cooperation as a three-phase process.

*Indo-U.S. naval cooperation consists of service-to-service cooperation, defense supply relationship, and strategic dialogue. Each phase of the relationship will proceed at its own pace. For example, ship visits, high-level contacts, and training can continue regardless of what happens at the defense supply and strategic levels. But defense supply and strategic dialogue represent the largest opportunities for cooperation between the two militaries. If the two sides cannot commit to a long-term relationship then they will not receive the benefits of the defense supply and strategic convergence phases.*

The Indian interviews suggest that many Indians, despite the significant gains in the past year, continue to regard the nascent Indo-U.S. military relationship as

ephemeral and opportunistic. The same high-ranking naval military officer who viewed cooperation as a three-phase process also characterized the current Indo-U.S. military relationship as an “affair” in which both parties are trying to obtain as much out of the relationship as possible while it lasts. He believed—

*The DPG process and the low-level cooperation activities proposed at the ESGs have created a “window of opportunity” for both militaries. Neither side knows how long the “affair” will last. Nor has either side decided to commit to the relationship. But both sides are being equally selfish in trying to obtain as much out of the relationship as possible. It is unclear when it will be over, but it will be good while it lasted. I seek to accomplish as much as possible as long as the window of opportunity remains open, but I will treat the relationship as no more than an “affair” until I see signs of a commitment to a long-term relationship.*

An American major general succinctly captured the paradox created by the different Indian and American approaches to, and objectives for, military cooperation—

*They [the Indians] will laud the relationship as a success if they obtain the technology that they want from the United States. We [the U.S. military] will view the relationship as a success if we are able to build a constructive military cooperation program that enables us to jointly operate with the Indians in the future.*

## Divergent Perceptions of IMET

Most American interviewees believe that the U.S. State Department’s International Military Education and Training (IMET) program represents a central component of the military-to-military relationship. [44] In fact, many American interviewees at PACOM described the IMET program as one of the “most powerful programs” to facilitate security cooperation because it not only enables the U.S. military to build critical relationships with India’s “best and brightest,” but it also allows India’s future military leadership to become familiar with the American system. A civilian described the power of the IMET program.

*The IMET program allows Indian officers to spend 10–12 months in the United States—an experience that “transforms” them and alters their thinking about the United States. The success of this program can be inferred from the response of India’s civilian bureaucrats to it. For years, they would not allow the Indian military to use its entire allotment of IMET funding because the bureaucrats feared that the Americans would brainwash the Indian military officers or turn them into spies. Today this attitude has changed. India’s military is using all of their IMET funding and its funding level is growing.*

An American colonel who taught one of the IMET courses recalled receiving a phone call from an Indian general, proclaiming that his colleague had returned to India a “changed person.” An American general at PACOM noted that the military relationship already was harvesting the benefits of the IMET investment because 40 percent of India’s delegation for the Army ESG had participated in a training program in the United States.

In contrast, most Indians do not share the American enthusiasm for the IMET program, although they are enthusiastic about exchanges, educational programs, and joint training. To them, IMET has two deficiencies. First, the Indian military would like access to more technical training courses for officers up to O-4 level, which they claim has not been available under the IMET program in the past. Second, the Indians would like to see more exchanges going in both directions because the IMET program reaches only a small number of high-ranking Indian officers. One Indian commander likened the impact of the IMET program to “a molecule in the ocean.” Many Indian officers suggested that more Americans should come to India for training courses. One Lt. general recommended that the Indian staff colleges have a permanent position for an American officer, which would be filled every year. The Indians believe that an increased number of American officers in India would have a larger impact on changing Indian mindsets about the United States because American officers would have contact with many more Indians in the training courses. One naval officer admitted that he does not know if he would have “chemistry” with his American counterparts because he has had no contact with them, but this is not the case with other militaries from around the world. He shared his experience while teaching at the Indian Naval Training Command.

*As a trainer at the Indian Naval Training Command, I trained naval officers from all over the world, but no American officers attended the courses during my tenure there. I cannot relate to Americans if I have no opportunities to interact with them. The military education programs must be larger and designed to reach a wider cross section of Indian military personnel.*

Several retired Indian Lt. generals recommended establishing programs that would give Indian officers the opportunity to attend university programs in the United States, outside of the military establishment, such as an international relations program at an Ivy League university to learn about the U.S. system. Currently such opportunities are offered only to civilians. One retired Lt. general recommended that—

*The best and brightest in the Indian military should be exposed to U.S. universities for a year to do some kind of fellowship to learn how the U.S. system functions. At the moment, such exchange program slots available in U.S. universities go to Indian civilians and bureaucrats, not military officers. Such programs will create an Indian officer corps with leaders who are comfortable with the U.S. system and understand how to work with the U.S. military. Moreover, such programs would give Indian officers a platform to contribute to the policy debate in Washington and Delhi.*



Several retired senior officers observed that America's seemingly unbreakable attachment to Pakistan, even when it threatens India's emerging relationship with the United States—as U.S. weapons transfers to Islamabad repeatedly have threatened to do—is based in no small part on the strong professional and, especially, social rapport between American and Pakistani officers that is the result of decades of joint training, educational exchanges, and collaboration on strategic issues. Many Indians spoke wistfully about attaining this level of chemistry with their American counterparts.

Other Indians recommend increasing U.S. participation in Indian training programs because they believe the quality of Indian programs offers their American counterparts new insights in areas such as counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. One retired Lt. general recalled that Americans who attended the Indian Special Forces training program often declared the Indians' program to be more rigorous than the equivalent U.S. program.

## Potential Military-Related Impediments

### Understanding Capabilities and Interoperability

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Most American military officers conceded that they know little about India's military capabilities, tactics, and doctrine. They want to know more to enable them to set their expectations appropriately and plan joint exercises and training effectively. One American general at PACOM observed—

*The Pacific Air Force (PACAF) needs to learn more about India's capabilities and what it will take to improve their capabilities. At the moment, we don't know what the PACAF should expect from the Indians because we have so little information about their Air Force, for example: What is the basic infrastructure around an Indian AFB? What level of service is available? Is Indian fuel clean enough for AF aircraft? Is safe bottled water available? We need more information about their airfield infrastructure—what they are capable of handling—if we hope to cooperate with them in the future.*

American military officers view interoperability, which is nearly nonexistent between the two militaries today, as essential to the success and longevity of an Indo-U.S. military relationship. Many interviewees (civilian and military) at PACOM believe the most promising way to overcome the interoperability gap is to encourage the Indians to buy American systems as they modernize. An American colonel argues that the sale of relatively low-level systems, such as Black Hawks and Sincgars radios, would immediately increase interoperability. U.S. military officers who want India to be a capable partner convey a uniform message: The United States must allow the sale of U.S. technology and equipment to India.

Others believe that interoperability can grow out of focused cooperation and joint training to tackle issues of shared concern. One American colonel expressed a widely held belief—

*If the U.S. military wants to build interoperability with the Indian Army, the short-term focus should be on Indian Special Forces and Special Operations for combating terrorism. Start small and build contacts through small unit exchanges, with the ultimate goal of achieving interoperability for PKO missions. Equip the Indian units with everything they need to operate together. This solves the interoperability problem—and we can learn a lot from the Indians in the process.*

Others suggest encouraging the Indians to become more active in PACOM coalition exercises with allies and friends in the Asia-Pacific region to enhance interoperability.

American military officers and many Indian interviewees cited two types of obstacles related to interoperability: access to technology and the impact of existing technology asymmetries. American military officers, particularly those at PACOM and in the U.S. embassy in New Delhi, and most Indians want India to have access to technologies as a means of facilitating interoperability. An American general noted—

*The only sure way to achieve any level of interoperability requires the U.S. Government to sell India U.S. equipment. Not only will foreign military sales help the two military communicate and operate together, but they also will enable the U.S. military to more easily assess India's military capabilities.*

Several acting and retired Indian military officers raised concerns about the existing “technology gap” that could prevent meaningful cooperation in the near term, particularly between the two armies; and in fact, they worry that joint initiatives may even be counterproductive if the gap is not bridged. For example, a highly placed Indian brigadier argued that—

*Given the technical incompatibility between the Indian and U.S. Special Forces units, joint training would demoralize the Indians and waste the time of both sides. To address this problem, the U.S. military should equip one or two Indian Special Forces units with U.S. technology and let them train with it. After 6 months, a joint exercise would benefit both militaries. They would learn how each military uses the technologies in different situations. The Americans may find that the Indians integrate the technology in different ways.*

In addition, the brigadier argued that such an exercise would reduce Indian suspicions that were fueled because the United States had blocked Indian attempts to acquire Special Forces technologies from France and Britain; it would generate goodwill at all levels of the unit; and it would provide insights for both militaries.

If the Indo-U.S. military relationship succeeds in achieving interoperability, it means that both sides have obtained what they want out of the relationship: for the Indians access to U.S. technology to enhance their operational capabilities, and for the Americans, a capable military partner with which they can easily operate jointly.

## Joint System Versus Service-Orientation

Indian and American military officers agreed on the importance and value of joint operations, and both militaries understand the difficulties of becoming a joint military. All military operations in the Asia-Pacific theater are joint operations, but American military officers admit that it took an act of Congress and 25 years to achieve the current level of joint operations, and that the process of becoming a fully joint fighting force is not yet completed. Likewise, the Indian military is also striving to build a joint military capability. The Indians hope to learn from the Americans as they embark on a major reorganization to support joint planning and operations. They recently stood up an Integrated Defense Staff as the first step in the process, and they are eager to learn more about joint doctrine, joint training and planning, and acquisition and logistics support for joint operations.

Although both militaries agree on the importance of joint operations, they hold a different view of how “jointness” will affect the Indo-U.S. military relationship. The majority of U.S. military officers believe that India’s lack of jointness will become an impediment in military cooperation, [45] whereas no Indian interviewee cited India’s lack of jointness as a problem.

American interviewees mentioned three different concerns stemming from India’s lack of jointness. First, some U.S. military officers, particularly those knowledgeable about the Indian system, are skeptical that India’s military is capable of moving toward a joint system voluntarily because the Indian Army, the most powerful Indian military service, will never agree to erode its monopoly of power. Nor will the Indians transform themselves as rapidly as they claim. One South Asia FAO expressed this widely held view—

*As India works toward a joint system, it may be easier to work with them, but their attempts to build a joint system are all smoke and mirrors. The Indian military has a Joint College, but they do not have any idea how to implement jointness. Their idea of a joint operation during the Kargil War was to coordinate the timing of the IAF bombings with the Army so that the Army could avoid being hit by friendly fire. It took an act of Congress to impose jointness on the U.S. military—it will likely be no different to India. The Indian Army will never relinquish its power to the Navy and Air Force voluntarily.*

Second, India’s plans to transform into an integrated, joint military increase the uncertainty of working with the Indians. A South Asia FAO asked—



- Where will the power lie?
- What powers will the Integrated Defense Staff have?
- How will decisions be made?
- Who will manage external military relationships?
- What role will the military have in strategic decisionmaking?
- What will be the role of the Integrated Defense Staff, if no “jointness” exists in their systems and operational concepts?

Many American interviewees believe that the answers to these questions will shape how the U.S. military engages the Indians. In addition, several interviewees warn that the U.S. military should avoid being pulled into India’s entrenched interservice rivalries as the transition evolves.

Third, many American interviewees envisage missed opportunities in the short-term arising from mismatches between U.S. joint-orientation and India’s service-orientation, and problems emerging over the long-term from operational difficulties in complex joint exercises. For example, a number of American interviewees at PACOM cited logistics as an area of missed opportunity. PACOM could not set up a logistics working group under the DPG because the Indians were uncomfortable discussing logistics in a joint forum. Their stovepiped system demands that PACOM inject logistic issues into the ESGs for each service. One civilian interviewee at PACOM observed that the Indians show no interest in participating in PACOM’s sponsored logistics seminars in the region because the Indians do not understand how the joint approach fits with their service-specific logistics system.

A South Asia FAO anticipated problems in future exercises with the Indians because all U.S. exercises are designed around joint forces. Based on his participation in recent exercises, he observed—

*The Indians do not fit well in U.S. joint exercises in the Pacific region. For example, the Indians tend only to send officers from one service to large exercises, such as the Cobra exercise. On the several occasions when they did send representation from more than one service, the Indian officers knew little about other services.*

In contrast to the widely held American concerns related to the joint-service mismatch, none of the Indians viewed India’s lack of jointness as a potential impediment to Indo-U.S. cooperation. In fact, only a handful of Indians even mentioned jointness in the interviews. For most Indians, it was a non-issue. The few retired military officers who mentioned jointness argued that India’s military is more joint at the operational level than most American officers realize, thus military cooperation will

be less difficult than it appears on the surface. One recently retired admiral described the situation like this—

*India's three services already coordinate their operations and already conduct multiple service amphibious operations. More coordination exists at the operational level than is understood by outsiders looking in, largely because India does not have an "out of area [the Indian Ocean] capability."*

In addition, these Indians argue that they are already operating in a joint environment with their new Joint Far Eastern Command on the Nicobar Islands—India's first experiment with a jointly organized command. [46] They believe that this offers unique opportunities to accelerate engagement.

## Naval Cooperation: A Promising Opportunity

The Americans and Indians in this sample broadly agree that naval cooperation represents one of the most promising areas of service-to-service cooperation because it supports the strongest area of strategic convergence—sea lane protection. In fact, most interviewees pointed to naval cooperation in the Strait of Malacca as the first concrete example of Indo-U.S. military cooperation. In addition, many Indians believe that the Indian Navy is best equipped to lead military cooperation with the U.S. military because its mission dovetails naturally with the larger cooperation agenda. The Indian Navy is the only Indian service that is organized to operate outside of India's borders. In the same vein, several American military officers believe that naval cooperation offers the most promise because cooperation can occur without provoking political anxieties in India. A high-ranking American admiral observed—

*The Navy may be the easiest service to move forward with cooperation because the U.S. Navy leaves no footprint in India. Exercises are conducted out of sight, with no U.S. troops on the ground in India. Moreover, patrolling the Strait of Malacca or the Strait of Hormuz provides fertile ground for cooperation.*

Several Indian and American military officers believe naval cooperation provides immediate opportunities because India's Joint Eastern Command on the Nicobar Islands, which represents the only joint structure in the Indian military, will facilitate joint training and exercise.

## End Notes

38. A handful of Americans expressed optimism that changes already underway in the relationship may accelerate this process. Several interviewees at PACOM noted the dramatic change in India's position:

Before 9/11, the U.S. Navy had one ship visit in 3 years in India. Now we are making regular visits. Before 9/11, the Indians would not allow U.S. troops with weapons on the ground when responding to the Gujarat earthquake, not even for force protection. Today, after 9/11, the U.S. military has "full access." We have witnessed a "sea change" in India's position.

39. For this reason, Indian policymakers called the lifting of the sanctions imposed in 1998 an "important political requirement for the military relationship to move forward."
40. An Indian strategic analyst who follows U.S. export control policy believes that Pakistan benefited more from the lifting of the 1998 sanctions that had been imposed on both countries—

*The United States must address the residual export control policies from the 1970s that still affect India. They leave India in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis Pakistan after the lifting of the 1998 sanctions on both countries.*

41. An Indian analyst who monitors technology issues described the practical side of Indian thinking about technology—

*The Indian military is interested in a subset of items that lie in the middle of the Munitions List. They are less concerned with the high-end technologies that agitate political sensitivities, and they are not interested in the low-end items that India can manufacture. They want a subset of technologies that enable interoperability.*

42. Many Indian officers stressed that the Indian military must avoid any appearance of taking orders from an outside power because the military acted as an instrument of British power both at home and abroad during the British Raj.
43. An American admiral observed that Indian demands suggest that they want more than a "normal relationship"—the Indians want "special treatment." During his recent interactions with his Indian counterparts, he recalled that they requested special exceptions and treatment on specific issues that the U.S. Navy did not even extend to traditional allies.
44. IMET was the only program that continued after the U.S. imposed sanctions in 1998 in response to India's nuclear tests. In FY03, India's IMET funding will double to \$1 M. Interviewees responsible for coordinating the IMET program calculate that this program can support approximately 30 Indians for 6 – 12 month training programs and will cover the travel costs and fees for approximately 150 Indians to attend conferences, seminars, and training programs in the United States.



45. However, it must be noted that a minority of American interviewees expressed more optimism about the joint-service mismatch. First, they do not believe that the challenges posed by this mismatch are any different from the challenges of operating with any other military. These interviewees argued that no military operates with the same level of jointness as the U.S. military. Hence they warn against blowing this common problem out of proportion with the Indians. Second, these interviewees point to the opportunities that exist for the U.S. military to assist the Indians in the transition by sharing U.S. joint doctrine, training, and planning. Several military officers and policy-makers expressed enthusiasm that the U.S. military could help shape the Indian evolution toward a joint military because they anticipate that the Indians will increasingly rely on Americans for advice and guidance.
46. One Indian pointed out that the Far Eastern Command is commanded by a naval officer, making it particularly conducive to cooperation with PACOM, which also has a naval focus.

# Organizing for Cooperation?

**H**ow should emerging Indo-U.S. military cooperation be organized? Both American and Indian interviewees expressed strong views in response to this question. Both sides agreed that as the Indo-U.S. military relationship begins to evolve beyond high-level talks, it will, and in some cases, already has confronted structural constraints and institutional obstacles on both sides that must be recognized.

The interviews revealed that both the U.S. and Indian systems are poorly organized to build a robust military relationship that maximizes the strategic benefits for both sides. Both sides generally concurred on five major problem areas.

On the U.S. side—

- India sits along the PACOM and CENTCOM seam, thereby confusing both the strategic rationale for engaging India and the organizational means to do so.
- No common vision or programmatic guidelines inform the way different U.S. military organizations (e.g., PACOM vice service headquarters) identify priorities and build their engagement plans, leading to confusion, inconsistency, and, occasionally, contradictions among those DoD elements entrusted with building a military-to-military relationship.
- The U.S. security cooperation effort is long on rhetoric and short on leadership, which encourages Indians to misunderstand and miscalculate.

On the Indian side—

- India's bureaucracy is unable to support broad-based military cooperation, creating bureaucratic chokepoints that stymie the military-to-military process.
- The stringent character of civilian control of India's military places special limitations on building a military-to-military relationship.

## Accommodating India's Strategic Interests: The PACOM-CENTCOM Divide

India's position along the PACOM and CENTCOM seam creates unique challenges for the U.S. military as it engages India. The interviews reveal that both Americans and Indians understand that India is lost in a kind of "strategic ether" between two powerful unified commands.

Indians expressed discomfort with PACOM for two reasons. First, nearly every Indian interviewee complained that because PACOM's AOR ends on India's western border, it covers only half of India's strategic interests and concerns. They observed that both India's most pressing strategic concerns and the areas, in their minds, most conducive to Indo-U.S. military cooperation lie outside of the PACOM AOR: counter-*ing* cross-border terrorism, promoting stability in Central Asia and Afghanistan, and protecting energy flows from the Persian Gulf. Although many Indian interviewees professed to be pleased with the level of engagement that they are receiving from PACOM, they also expressed intense frustration that PACOM personnel are constrained by their limited AOR from discussing some of the most pressing issues on India's national security agenda.

Second, they expressed some dissatisfaction with what one acting Indian brigadier described as "PACOM's strategic fatigue"—

*India sits on the horizon of PACOM's AOR. We [Indians] inhabit a gray, neglected zone in U.S. military planning. Until recently the AOR really extended only to Singapore. Unfortunately, by the time PACOM planners think about India, they have already had to deal with Japan, with Korea, with Taiwan, with China, and with Thailand and Singapore.*

The Indians asked repeatedly why the U.S. military divides South Asia down the middle in this way, when it makes perfect sense to them to join strategic issues that stretch through India from the Persian Gulf to Southeast Asia. Some American interviewees argued that the Indians only recently have become concerned with the implications of the CENTCOM/PACOM divide through South Asia, that this is a new complaint. But many Indian interviewees insisted that Indian military authorities have been aware of this problem for more than a decade, and that they raised it with General Kicklighter when he traveled to India in the late 1980s.

Furthermore, a number of Indian interviewees focused on the serious breakdown in communications between Washington and Delhi immediately after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 as a predictable outcome of the PACOM/CENTCOM divide. The breakdown occurred, in their view, when immediately after the attacks in New York and Washington, India made unprecedented offers of support, including logistics and basing for a U.S. campaign against Afghanistan; but the United States failed to respond,



causing widespread acrimony against the United States in Indian military and policy circles. The problem, Indian interviewees believe, was a consequence of CENTCOM's being given the go-ahead to conduct operations against Afghanistan without engaging the Indians because India is not in CENTCOM's AOR.

The message conveyed by the Indians was nearly uniform: They believe PACOM is insufficient for engaging the U.S. military across India's full range of strategic interests. One high-ranking Indian policymaker expressed this widely held concern—

*To understand Indian national interests and India's potential role in the region, the United States must view the Indian Ocean as a region, not a bunch of segments. An institutionalized link between CENTCOM and PACOM that allows the United States to understand India's role across the region is required. Absent an integrated view of the region, the relationship will continue to face the communication breakdowns that occurred after 9/11. Areas of shared concerns, such as terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, narco-trafficking, and sea lane protection cascade across the PACOM and CENTCOM.*

In contrast, most American interviewees touted the benefits of dividing India and Pakistan into separate AORs. They argue that including both states—India and Pakistan—in the same AOR would compromise the credibility of the commanders of PACOM and CENTCOM and make it impossible for them to build trust and forge a satisfactory relationship with either state. Hence, the majority of U.S. military officers believed that the current structure enables the U.S. military to build cooperative relationships with both states, irrespective of the current state of conflict between India and Pakistan. One colonel described the current divide as permitting a degree of “clientitis.” He explained—

*The different CINCDoms are free to maximize relations with India or Pakistan within their respective AORs without becoming embroiled in the Indo-Pakistan conflict. Within the guidelines outlined by the policymakers, PACOM can build a “pure” security cooperation program with India to support U.S. interests in the region without having to compromise or balance its objectives with how the other country [Pakistan] will respond.*

American interviewees sent mixed messages about the level of interaction between PACOM and CENTCOM. Several South Asia FAOs at PACOM claim that they interact regularly with their counterparts at CENTCOM. But many of the other interviewees claim to have little or no interaction with CENTCOM. For example, one Navy captain observed that service commanders in PACOM seldom, if ever, visit or factor Pakistan into their planning; likewise, service commanders in CENTCOM seldom, if ever, visit India. At the same time, others commented that the commanders tend to think beyond their AORs, but the lower level staff do not. Several interviewees at PACOM observed that PACOM makes more of an effort to increase its transparency with CENTCOM than CENTCOM does with PACOM. For example, one

colonel observed that PACOM opened a liaison office in CENTCOM during Operation Enduring Freedom, but he was unaware of any CENTCOM liaison office at PACOM. [47] In contrast to the Indians, few American interviewees seemed aware that a lack of transparency between CENTCOM and PACOM could produce dangerous blindspots in U.S. policymaking, and could lead to misunderstandings, miscalculations, and missed opportunities with India, [48] with the most illustrative example being only three American interviewees having identified Central Asia as a potential area of Indo-U.S. cooperation, as mentioned in a preceding chapter.

Indian interviewees offered a number of possible remedies to problems arising from the PACOM/CENTCOM divide, as they understand them—

- Shift the bilateral relationship from Hawaii to Washington to facilitate direct interaction with the Joint Staff, which, Indians believe, has a larger strategic view of the region
- Create an institutional relationship or mechanism between India and CENTCOM to open communications on shared concerns in CENTCOM's AOR
- Establish a three-way dialogue among CENTCOM, PACOM, and the Indian Armed Forces to discuss cross-cutting issues, such as counter-terrorism, sea lane protection, and narco-trafficking
- Split India down the middle: PACOM would be responsible for India's Eastern Command, and CENTCOM would be responsible for India's Western Command.

The American interviewees balked at the suggestion, apparently made by Indian Defence Minister Fernandes during his visit in January, that India be included in both CENTCOM and PACOM because it would compromise the CINCs' ability to build "pure" relationships with both states. One South Asia FAO commented that India would receive a cool welcome at CENTCOM because its leadership views India as obstructionist in achieving its strategic objectives in Afghanistan, particularly after India moved troops to the LOC in January. That South Asia FAO anticipated that India would receive a rude awakening if India were to interact regularly with CENTCOM.

Several American officers suggested that the U.S. military consider elevating U.S.-India cooperation to the same level as cooperation with Japan and South Korea, which is managed by service headquarters, not PACOM. It is thought that this idea would receive widespread approval among Indians.

## **Misperceptions Over the Role of the Unified Commands**

Interviews with Indians and Americans reveal that they have very different understandings of the power and authority of the unified commands and their role in

building a military-to-military relationship. American military officers in Washington and at PACOM who have worked closely with Indians believe that Indians fundamentally misunderstand the unified commands' central role in designing and executing the military's security cooperation programs, which includes wielding power and authority and allocating the bulk of resources. Moreover, they believe this misunderstanding propels Indian military authorities toward interacting with service headquarters—which is where Indians believe the real power and authority lies, as it does in the Indian military—not with the CINCs, specifically PACOM. [49] In the minds of the Americans, the Indians reinforce this perception of under-estimating PACOM's role when, according to a South Asia FAO at PACOM—

*They [Indians] opt for trips to Washington instead of to Honolulu. For example, the Indians recently declined to attend a Chief of Defense Staff Conference in Honolulu because the Indians wanted the first trip for new Chief of the Army/Commander of the Integrated Defense Staff General Padmanabhan to be to Washington, not Honolulu. The Indians missed a huge opportunity, because the Japanese, South Koreans, Thais, and others all sent their chiefs of staff to Honolulu. The Indians usually send a third-tier general to PACOM conferences.*

American interviewees interpret Indian behavior in two ways: First, Indians have not grasped where the power to build a security cooperation program lies in the U.S. military. Second, as a large power, the Indians resent being confined to a regional command and thus, they seek to establish a direct relationship with Washington. Several South Asia FAOs characterized the problem as follows—

*Interacting with two star flag officers at PACOM reinforces Indian insecurities of not being treated with the respect that they deserve. Or the Indians see PACOM as another U.S. attempt to put India in a box. [50]*

The Americans have tried to accommodate these perceptions of Indian behavior by including representatives from the service headquarters in the ESG discussions.

When confronted with this pervasive American perception, Indian interviewees in New Delhi rejected it out of hand. Nearly all Indian interviewees argued that Indians understand the central role that PACOM plays in military security cooperation clearly, and that the Commander U.S. Pacific Command controls the resources and agenda for U.S. engagement with India. Moreover, they claimed that Indians are not averse to interacting with PACOM, but high-ranking Indians opt for Washington over Honolulu, they argued, precisely because they understand the unified command structure and have concluded that PACOM cannot address the full range of India's strategic or functional interests. The Indians want to overcome the limitations of PACOM by interacting directly with Washington and CONUS-based facilities. And moreover, the service headquarters oversee other key elements of the military-to-military relationship (e.g., technology transfer, see the next section for detail). One highly placed Indian brigadier explained—



*The Indian military is focused on the “macro issues” (e.g., training infrastructure, joint doctrine, technology) not only functional issues. We do not believe that PACOM, because of its position and function, has a full perspective of the issues that interest us, particularly for the Indian Army.*

## Lack of Common U.S. Engagement Objectives, Guidelines, and Practices

Corresponding to the PACOM-CENTCOM divide issue, different offices responsible for policy planning for the OSD, the services, and Joint Staff place India in different strategic or operational contexts. Not surprisingly, interviews with officers throughout the DoD revealed no shared view of India’s importance to U.S. national security interests. Moreover, the engagement plans designed by these offices share few goals or expectations for the relationship.

Interviewees on the American side revealed at least five distinct ways of defining India’s strategic location in Asia, based on different notions of how Asia is to be divided programmatically.

- PACOM treats India as the western border of its Asia-Pacific AOR. USAF’s Regional Plans and Issues Division also places India in the Asia-Pacific region, as defined by PACOM’s AOR.
- USN’s Plans, Policy, and Operations Division locates India under the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia Branch.
- USA’s Regional Integration and Assessment Division groups India with South and Southeast Asia.
- The Joint Staff groups India with Southeast and Central Asia.
- OSD/International Security Affairs (OSD/ISA) places India in its Near East/South Asia Division.

The services, the Joint Staff, and OSD view India in different ways because of the way India is grouped with different sets of countries. No common or comprehensive picture of U.S. strategy informs these efforts. For example, in the Navy headquarters, one interviewee from the Navy had a number of interesting observations about how India relates to Pakistan and how India relates to the Middle East; but he had no sense of how India factors in Navy thinking about China. He admitted that he does not think about India beyond the context of the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. His colleague, who is responsible for East Asia, noted that India has not factored into his thinking on the Strait of Malacca. [51] This gap in thinking existed in the

same office. The disparity in views grows starker across organizations that view India through different filters. For example, interviewees at PACOM described India as a potentially capable partner in the Asia-Pacific region, a potential counter-weight to China, and a hedge against the loss of traditional U.S. forward presence in the region. In contrast, a policymaker in OSD/ISA viewed India primarily as an “anchor in an arch of crisis, stretching from the Balkans to South Asia.” Nowhere did one overarching strategic vision emerge to guide the policies and initiatives of the various offices involved in developing a military relationship.

Indian officials—both military and non-military—who deal with different DoD, Joint Staff, and service offices repeatedly described their confusion over their American counterparts’ “strategic view” of the relationship, which they see as disjointed and incomplete. Both Indian and American interviewees observed that the U.S. engagement process lacks coordination.

Even within the services, coordination between organizations supporting different parts of the relationship is minimal, for example, between the service headquarters and their components at PACOM (e.g., USARPAC, Pacific Fleet, and Pacific Air Force). South Asia specialists at the service headquarters, who are responsible for foreign military sales (FMS) and counter-visits, had little understanding of the plans and activities of their PACOM service counterparts. For example, before the service-specific ESGs in January/February 2002, none of the interviewees in the sample responsible for India in the service headquarters could describe how his respective service component at PACOM was thinking about India, what instructions it had been given—presumably by the Commander of PACOM—or what it was planning for the first ESG meeting. None could identify specific security cooperation priorities for engaging India. All deferred these questions to their respective service components at PACOM.

Few linkages exist between the different components of a military-to-military relationship (FMS and counter-visits on one side, and security cooperation initiatives on the other). The organizations responsible for these different components of the relationship appear to base their decisions on different priorities and requirements, and each develops and implements its program with little understanding of how its decisions and activities might affect the activities of other U.S. national security entities. One South Asia FAO at PACOM characterized the problem like this—

*India desk officers in the policymaking organizations (e.g., OSD, PACOM, and the Joint Staff) develop policy and engagement initiatives for India in a vacuum. In contrast, the service headquarters and the U.S. State Department make decisions about foreign military sales based on the impact on the regional dynamics, not solely on the engagement initiatives and priorities. Thus different dynamics drive the decisions made by service headquarters and PACOM authorities.*

For American military planners, this may be normal and unobjectionable procedure, but it confuses the Indians in two ways. First, as noted above, the Indians view

their own service headquarters as central pillars of authority and prestige in their own military; hence, they are predisposed to view U.S. service headquarters in the same way. An underlying current in the interviews with Indians is their notion that the U.S. service headquarters ultimately should be guiding security cooperation with India, even though they acknowledge the important role of PACOM. Second, they are reinforced in this predisposition by the service headquarters' control of FMS—over which PACOM appears to them to have little influence—which Indians currently view as their highest priority in pursuing Indo-U.S. engagement. Thus the confusion: While the Indians are being encouraged to engage via PACOM, both their natural inclination to invest prestige and power in U.S. service headquarters and those headquarters' control over what the Indians believe is the most important reward for successful engagement—technology transfer—incline them toward Washington first. The Indians thus sense a dichotomy on the American side between security cooperation strategy that flows from PACOM and the means to achieve it—i.e., high-level exchanges, technology transfer and FMS—that flow exclusively from the service headquarters.

## State Department Is Seen as Impediment

The interviews reveal one strong area of agreement between Americans and Indians: the U.S. State Department is an obstacle to developing the military-to-military relationship quickly because it does not share DoD's longer term strategic view, and it possesses the power to stall the licensing process for technology transfer. The comments of an Indian admiral reflect the sentiments of many of his colleagues—

*Today Americans must view India with a wider perspective than in the past, but the U.S. State Department does not appear to have changed its understanding of India for decades. Consequently, policymakers in the U.S. State Department lag behind their counterparts in DoD who view India's contribution to the region beyond the narrow view of South Asia. The attitudes at the State Department must change if the relationship is ever to progress beyond low-level service-to-service cooperation into a well-developed defense supply relationship.*

A highly placed Indian policymaker added—

*The Indians are watching how the State Department bureaucracy treats India, and they do not see any changes in prior State Department habits. For the Indians, continual stalling demonstrates a lack of U.S. commitment to the Indo-U.S. relationship.*

Many American interviewees in DoD share this view of the U.S. State Department as an obstacle to the emerging Indo-U.S. relationship. They base their criticisms on past experiences dealing with the U.S. State Department, and they are skeptical about its willingness to abandon its prejudices, particularly given the ongoing tension in Kashmir. The following comments are typical—



*Congress and the U.S. State Department repeatedly deploy stalling tactics against India by refusing to send India even the most benign items, such as spare parts for low-cost aircraft, even after the Indians have paid for them.*

*Export licenses die in the U.S. State Department as often as they are turned down, and it is unlikely that trend will change significantly.*

*The licensing process in the U.S. State Department will create obstacles and chokepoints on most equipment purchased by India. This process is even more convoluted than the Indian bureaucracy.*

*U.S. bureaucracy is the largest impediment related to technology transfer. The U.S. State Department is sitting on 12 defense technology applications [as of January 2002] for which DoD seeks approval. If the technology component of the Indo-U.S. relationship is to succeed, DoD will need to enlist U.S. industry to use political clout in order to prevent the license agreements from becoming bogged down in the U.S. State Department.*

American military officers believe that the U.S. State Department's tendency to "go slow" with technology transfer to India could undermine the U.S. military's ability to develop trust and confidence with their Indian counterparts, and it inhibits developing interoperability between the two militaries—a prerequisite if the U.S. military hopes to conduct joint operations with India in the future. One American colonel who interacts directly with the Indians complained about "inexplicable foot dragging" in Washington—

*The Indians are increasingly frustrated because of endless delays to shipments of spares for the Sea King, which is a helicopter used for research and rescue operations. The license for the spares was submitted in November 2001 and as of late March 2002 had not been processed. A process that normally requires a maximum of 60 days had taken at least 4 months. Such delays only serve to undermine the progress made at the ESGs, and they fuel India's insecurities and undermine its trust in the U.S. side.*

## **"Owning" India: Long on Rhetoric and Short on Leadership and Resources**

Many American interviewees believe the Indo-U.S. relationship needs less rhetoric and more attention and commitment by U.S. political, but especially military leadership, where senior military leaders need to assume "ownership" of Indo-U.S. military-to-military relationship engagement. In Indian eyes, no such leadership is yet evident to Indian planners, or at best, it is on-again, off-again attention. Many

American interviewees in the sample saw this at least as clearly as the Indians, and they worry that U.S. commitment to the new relationship is not deep enough to build trust with the Indians. One highly placed American interviewee who works closely with the Indians observed—

*When the Americans do not believe or support in private the public declarations about the Indo-U.S. relationship, Indians find it difficult reconciling what they hear in public declarations with the way they are treated by American policymakers.*

Another senior American officer who works closely with the Indians concedes that he does not see the United States and India becoming “natural allies” because a new vision of India as an ally—to date an unconventional notion—has not percolated down into the lower levels of the political or military bureaucracies. He and many other American interviewees argued that—

*A strategic relationship with the Indians will require constant top-level attention (i.e., Secretary Powell, Secretary Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Rice). This kind of top-level attention is required because any relationship with India will affect U.S. policies in other areas, such as space, non-proliferation, nuclear policy, and arms exports. If the Indo-U.S. relationship is to succeed, current U.S. policies in these areas must evolve, lest the relationship once again fall victim to the “non-proliferation cottage industry.”*

The consensus view among American military interviewees [as of February 2002] is that no senior leadership has assumed “ownership” of engagement with India, and no one in the services, especially, has committed resources to it. They observe that senior military leadership has paid little attention to India until recently, with the resumption of the DPG and the ESGs in February 2002. One South Asia FAO explained—

*Until recently the FAOs have been the only advocates of the relationship. But now the relationship cannot be sustained by FAOs alone. It needs senior leadership to develop a vested interest in the success of the relationship by spending time in India and leading exercises.*

In addition, many interviewees observe that as PACOM faces more commitments that must be fulfilled with limited resources, the importance of senior leadership to support any new relationship grows. Many interviewees at PACOM at the programmatic level conceded that they have done little work on India, that they did not have any top-level requests for it and that they did not have any resources for new projects in their current budgets. According to one senior officer—

*The rhetoric and promises regarding security cooperation with India must be backed up with a reassessment of priorities in the PACOM AOR and resource allocations in the budget process that reflect the importance of the relationship.*

These frequently articulated concerns reflect the fact that although a strong interest in India is emerging at many levels, few or no resources to conduct programs have been committed, which will require cutting other commitments. A South Asia FAO at PACOM grappled with difficult questions that are fundamental to building a military-to-military relationship—

*How would the services fund broad security cooperation with India, given the already limited resources for existing priorities? Which existing activities would be cut to make the necessary resources available? Only the policymakers and military can allocate the resources required to build a robust and enduring Indo-U.S. military relationship.*

An American general who will be increasingly active in building the Indo-U.S. military relationship acknowledged the resource constraints he faces, but explained that he hopes to design security cooperation initiatives with India that complement existing Army training programs underway, so that the American troops feel as if they are benefiting from the exercises.

## India Lacks the Bureaucratic Capacity to Support the Relationship

Americans' experience with India's bureaucracy produces reactions ranging from mild annoyance to total exasperation. [52] Many American interviewees believe that India's organizational structure and its bureaucracy lack the capacity to support broad-based military cooperation and that these structural factors could dampen enthusiasm for engaging India in the future. According to an experienced South Asia FAO—

*We know that the Indian bureaucracy can act quickly at the highest levels, for example if Defence Minister George Fernandes demands action. India demonstrated its ability to act quickly when it decided to offer the U.S. access to military installations immediately after 9/11. The problem with the Indian bureaucracy lies at the middle and low levels, which have proven repeatedly to be incapable of processing the simplest of requests.*

A number of American military officers observed that the density and unresponsiveness of India's bureaucracy are shaping the perceptions of colonels who will be generals in 5 years, who then might be less willing to work with the Indians.

American interviewees identified a range of existing or potential problems that stem from India's bureaucratic structure. They include—

- Asymmetry in institutional capacity to support a broad-based relationship



- Chokepoints in bureaucratic channels that impede or obstruct programs
- Centralized decisionmaking that creates the impression of non-responsiveness and indecisiveness.

## Asymmetry in Institutional Capacity Threatens to Overwhelm the Indians

Americans and Indian interviewees observe that the Indian Ministry of Defense was not structured to support a broad-based security cooperation program efficiently. In a massive MOD bureaucracy, one person and a small staff—the Joint Secretary for Planning and Coordination [53]—are responsible for military outreach with all countries; and over the past 5 years, India's military engagement with countries in the Indian Ocean Basin, Asia, and beyond, including the United States, has increased dramatically.

Many American interviewees observe that the MOD's limited institutional structure appears to be capable of handling only one major initiative at a time. Several American interviewees related that their Indian counterparts had recently delayed their plans because they claimed to be overwhelmed. For example, an American major leading one of the DPG's working groups recalled how his attempts to plan the first meeting were stalled due to an official visit by the Russian foreign minister. His Indian counterpart lacked the resources to support a high-level visit and preliminary planning of a future meeting simultaneously. In the same vein, a PACAF action officer described how his Indian counterparts told him that they could not begin planning the Air Force ESG meeting until General Beggert's visit to India ended. The planning for the ESG began almost immediately after General Beggert's plane departed from New Delhi. Consequently, the Indians' apparent inability to support multiple initiatives left PACAF with only a week to plan the first Air Force ESG.

One American colonel believes that the responsibility lies with the Americans to prevent India's lack of capacity from impeding the relationship. He argued—

*The U.S. military has built an entire chain of command for security cooperation that is supported by offices in OSD, the Joint Staff, PACOM, and each of the services, all of which have a separate team focused on South Asia. In contrast to the multiple U.S. organizations, a handful of Indians support all interactions with foreign militaries. We [the Americans] must be aware of this significant asymmetry in organizational capacity; otherwise, we could easily overwhelm the Indians. All American initiatives should be coordinated and designed to build on and complement one another.*

## Chokepoints in India's Bureaucracy Stymie the Relationship

The Indian military is highly insulated from any contact with foreigners, except with approval through official channels. [54] This official channel with the authority to monitor the Indian military's access to foreigners is the Directorate General for Military Intelligence (DGMI). In short, the deputy director of the DGMI must approve all foreign interactions with the military. In the minds of Americans, DGMI is becoming an increasingly problematic chokepoint that could undermine a broad-based military-to-military relationship. An American major echoed the conclusions of many interviewees—

*You know an institutional arrangement is destined to fail or undermine the relationship when all visits and exchanges depend on the productivity of one person. Once when the deputy director of DGMI went on a much deserved 2-week vacation, all interactions between the Americans and Indians were suspended. This meant that the Indo-U.S. relationship was put on hold temporarily because one person in the Indian MOD was out of the office. This kind of chokepoint could seriously impede a growing relationship.*

One South Asia FAO complains this “sometimes impenetrable” chokepoint could lead to a slow death of the Indo-U.S. relationship by generating frustration across the policymaking community in DoD. He worries that the Indians do not understand how damaging these chokepoints can be for building a robust relationship. They lead the Americans to conclude that India is uninterested in DoD initiatives, which has occasionally prompted the American sponsor of the initiative to divert funding for projects to countries from which the U.S. side receives a positive and prompt response. Experiences like this permeated the interviews—

*An office in OSD and the U.S. Navy sought to send a team of lawyers (O6 colonel-level) to India to discuss the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and India's EEZ with a view toward opening discussion about differing U.S. and Indian interpretations of the Convention. The Indians stalled the OSD/Navy initiative for over a year. When the American sponsors were about to lose their funding for the project, they abandoned their India initiative and used their funding to engage another country. This kind of low-level engagement could have been facilitated if the Indian and American lawyers had been able to meet without approval from the DGMI and other higher levels of authority in India's bureaucracy.*

## India's Centralized Decisionmaking Considered Non-responsive

All American interviewees commented on the highly centralized nature of the Indian decisionmaking process in the Indian MOD. They observe that a small group of high-level officials make all decisions. This contrasts greatly from the U.S. system, in which decisionmaking, particularly detailed planning, is decentralized and responsibility is delegated to the lower levels of the bureaucracy, particularly in the military. From an

American perspective, India's structure has two implications for the Indo-U.S. relationship. First, the decisionmaking process slows significantly because lower level staff have little authority to make decisions. American interviewees (civilian and military) across the board complained about the lack of timely responses from their Indian counterparts, even to the simplest requests. One American recalled that his Indian counterpart did not have the authority to agree to a date for a joint meeting, even though he was designated as India's leader of the working group. Because each decision required consultation with his Indian superiors, the American interviewee complained that the planning process became bogged down with the Indian's "interminable indecisiveness."

Second, many American interviewees believe that India's centralized decision-making also creates more opportunities for issues to die before they reach decision-makers. A handful of American interviewees who work closely with the Indians see a trend where colonel-level issues (e.g., planning a joint exercise or exchange programs) that are not important enough for high-level attention but are critical for moving the military relationship forward languish in the bowels of the Indian MOD. A South Asia FAO worried about the second order consequences of the ongoing frustrations associated with engaging the Indians—

*The problems with the Indian bureaucracy emerge most prominently with the middle-level issues. The Indian MOD's centralized system makes it difficult to receive a response if there is no top-level interest, which means the most mundane meeting is the most difficult to plan with the Indians. Consequently, many COL-level initiatives die on the vine. In the past, Americans have faced difficulties planning routine activities that are critical to building the relationship—for example, joint exercises or exchange programs—but that are not important enough to receive high-level attention.*

Another South Asia FAO observed that the DPG could help alleviate this problem—

*The DPG not only created space for the Indian military to build a military-to-military relationship under its civilian leadership, but it may help raise the visibility of activities and issues that require action at the lower levels of the bureaucracy. At the moment, decisions will likely still languish at the mid and low levels of the bureaucracy, waiting for approval from a small circle of decisionmakers. Presumably, if the DPG raises the visibility of Indo-U.S. activities, then India decisionmakers may push their subordinates to push through the initiatives more quickly.*

The American military officers find Indian non-responsiveness particularly disconcerting and frustrating because during face-to-face meetings, their Indian counterparts appear eager to move forward and enthusiastic to follow through with agreed agenda items. An American general observed that the Indian system makes it "difficult for the Indian military to say yes to the Americans." He complains that even when the Indians push the Americans aggressively to obtain what India wants, the Indian bureaucracy responds at a snail's pace.



An underlying source of frustration permeates all of the American comments and experiences with Indian bureaucracy and its unresponsiveness: Americans don't know how to interpret India's non-responsiveness—the unanswered e-mails, the long silences, the inability to communicate directly with military counterparts. They ask themselves—

- Are the Indians uninterested in the initiative?
- Do the Indians know how to respond?
- Did a civilian bureaucrat kill an initiative for political reasons?
- Are the Indians excited by busily trying to formulate an appropriate response, which takes time?
- Was the message lost in transit and never received?

Americans do not know what they should do to prompt an Indian response if they do not know the reason for their Indian counterparts' silence.

In contrast to their American counterparts, few Indian interviewees mentioned India's bureaucratic lethargy as a potential obstacle. When asked about the implications of the bureaucratic asymmetries and non-responsiveness, several Indian policy-makers dismissed them as insignificant or described them as the kind of bureaucratic obstacles the Indians must deal with every day—a fact of life in India. Two high-level policymakers expressed the two most common responses—

*Indian bureaucracy is plagued with the ills of any bureaucracy. Americans must understand that the non-responsiveness of Indian bureaucracy stems from its fundamental character—an organization that sui generis was created to maximize employment rather than actually accomplish anything. Moreover, it is ill-equipped to operate in a rapidly changing environment. The bureaucracy's tendency to be non-responsive should not be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to thwart the Indo-U.S. relationship. In fact, the Indian bureaucracy has been more aggressive in supporting India's relationship with the United States than with any other country.*

And...

*The Indian bureaucracy is slow, but the U.S. system can be as difficult as the Indian system because we do not understand how decisions are made in the U.S. system. For Indians, it is an impenetrable black box reinforced with laws and regulations that cannot be influenced or changed. The existing organizational asymmetries can be overcome by building trust in the relationship. The relationship must set up mechanisms to deal with these problems.*

A highly placed brigadier characterized the problem in terms of decision cycles. He observed—

*The U.S. and Indian decisionmaking cycles—observe, orient, decide, and act—operate grossly out of sync. The U.S. decisionmaking cycle operates much more efficiently and quickly than India's. This gap must be closed over time, but in the meantime, Americans must exercise patience when dealing with the Indians, and for their part, the Indians must accelerate their decisionmaking cycle. The Americans must accept that the Indians tend to operate from day to day. If they [Americans] want Indians to respond to a proposal or plan an event, they should send information at least 2 weeks in advance to give the Indians time to process it, prepare a response, and obtain necessary approvals.*

## Civilian Control of the Military

Indian interviewees were quick to mention the civilian control of the military as a defining feature of the Indo-U.S. military relationship. Many active and retired Indian military officers sought to use their interview to send a message that the U.S. military must be sensitive to the bureaucratic and political constraints in which the Indian military must operate. They want the Americans to know that the Indian military will be highly sensitive to remaining in step with its political leadership, largely because the military wants to avoid repeating past mistakes. Indian military officers' thinking is strongly informed by their earlier attempts at Indo-U.S. military cooperation in the 1990s, when cooperation between the Indian and U.S. militaries gained momentum before it was approved fully by India's top civilians. In response, the civilian leadership, offended that it had not had a larger decisionmaking role, shut down the process. For this reason, the Indian military prefers a top-down approach to building a relationship, with nearly all Indian interviewees insisting that the political relationship must drive the military relationship, and any military-to-military relationship must include both the MOD and MEA in the planning process.

The stringent character of civilian control over India's military prompted several different responses and concerns from active and retired Indian military officers and Indian policymakers—

- Enthusiasm about the current window of opportunity
- Apologies about the military's lack of experience with military-to-military cooperation
- Recommendations for moving the Indo-U.S. military relationship forward productively.

## The Indians See a Promising Window of Opportunity

Nearly all Indian interviewees believed that a window of opportunity to build an Indo-U.S. military relationship has opened, in which the obstacles posed by the civilian leadership in the past will be less troublesome. Several highly placed Indians attributed the “surprising” progress in military cooperation since 9/11 to two primary factors. First, an unprecedented agreement within the Indian establishment to build a military-to-military relationship with the United States has mitigated many internal obstacles that obstructed the process in the past. One high-ranking Indian policymaker characterized the unique opportunity to push the relationship forward as follows—

*For the first time, the National Security Advisor, the Minister of External Affairs, the Minister of Defense, and the military services all agree on how to move forward with the United States. No institution in the policymaking process is trying to undermine the relationship. This convergence in thinking has led the MEA to have easier access to MOD activities, thereby making it easier to give the Indian military space to build military cooperation.*

Second, the recent success of the DPG has provided the political “cover” required for Indian military officers to discuss and plan security cooperation initiatives in more detail at an operational level at the service ESGs. An American officer who has interacted with the Indians for many years and attended the ESGs in February 2002 concurred that the Indian military has more freedom than it has had in past years. He observed—

*At the Navy and Army ESGs, the discussions with the Indians were open and frank. The Indian military appeared to have more latitude to make decisions and discuss issues than during past discussions with them. For example, they had the freedom to suggest adding a submarine component to a proposed naval exercise. The Indian Navy is eager to build a closer relationship.*

However, American interviewees are concerned that tight civilian control of the Indian military inhibits decisionmaking that is essential to propel the relationship forward. Unlike the U.S. military, which has significant freedom to define its priorities and initiatives within the broad parameters set by its civilian leadership, the Indian military still lacks the authority to design, plan, and execute an initiative without civilian oversight. One American admiral captured the essence of concerns expressed by many Americans interviewees—

*The Indian military officers find it difficult to make a decision on any issue, even a relatively insignificant decision, without higher level approval. This creates a situation in which the Indian military may be enthusiastic about moving the relationship forward, but pockets of suspicion in the Indian bureaucracy—the bureaucrats who question U.S. motives—have the power to stall the relationship.*



The frequency of this type of observation by the Americans suggests that they are less optimistic than their Indian counterparts about this apparent “window of opportunity” created by agreement among Indian national security leadership to build a strategic relationship with the United States. Americans continue to be concerned about the anti-Americanism that they see lurking at the lower levels of the bureaucracy.

The Indian military has capitalized on the success of the DPG and the positive consensus of the policymaking community to push through reforms in the military. An Indian brigadier marveled at the impact that the Indo-U.S. military relationship has had on the India military’s ability to sell reform initiatives to the civilian leadership. He observed—

*The fastest way to garner support for military reform is by declaring “the U.S. military conducts operations in this way.” The civilians will sanction any reforms that emulate the American system.*

The brigadier observed “U.S. influence in the Indian military is stronger than it has ever been.”

## Mea Culpa for India’s Lack of Experience

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The Indian military’s mission since Independence has been confined to protecting the territorial integrity of India and securing South Asia, not projecting power beyond the region. For this reason, many Indian interviewees concede that the Indian military has little experience building a robust military-to-military relationship with any country, not even with the Soviet Union. [55] Consequently, many Indian interviewees feel as if the Indian military has much to learn and little to contribute to building the Indo-U.S. relationship during the early stages. In fact, a number of Indian policymakers apologized for the perfunctory nature of their briefings at the first DPG and ESGs and promised that the Indian contribution would be more sophisticated in future interactions. Indian policymakers believe that the Indo-U.S. relationship will help India’s military to emerge from its insularity and will spur new thinking at all levels of the policymaking structure. This “lack of experience” theme surfaced in the interviews when the Indians sought to explain their own deficiencies in the relationship. Few, however, saw the apparent contradiction in this excuse of demanding that the Indo-U.S. relationship be one of “equals.”

## Recommendations for Moving the Indo-U.S. Relationship Forward

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Most Indian interviewees believe that the Americans must be responsible for building the necessary political relationships to support and reinforce progress on the military level because the Indian military is constrained from doing so. Indian military officers warn that the Indian military and civilian bureaucrats must be engaged

simultaneously and that the Americans must ensure that both tracks—civilian and military—proceed at the same pace. A retired Indian Lt. general warned—

*If the bureaucracy is seen to be ahead of the military, it will foment resentment among military officers. If the Indian military is perceived to be ahead, the bureaucracy will create obstacles and impediments to block progress.*

In the same vein, a retired air commodore cautioned that service-to-service cooperation as a means to build confidence must be approached carefully—

*In the past, service-to-service cooperation only served to foment increased anti-Americanism and skepticism at the subterranean levels of the MOD. This ultimately stalled the process. The Americans must get the “Brahmins” on board before they start to build relationships at the service level and their [the Brahmins’] concerns must be routinely addressed throughout the planning and execution process.*

In fact, American officers who interact with the Indians routinely have adapted a three-pronged strategy to engage their Indian counterparts. An American colonel in the DAO in New Delhi explained that he communicates all U.S. initiatives simultaneously to the MEA, MOD, and the services. He advised—

*Anyone who engages the Indians must understand up front that a multipronged strategy coupled with long-lead times is required for success. Without this basic understanding, Americans will become frustrated and disillusioned.*

## End Notes

47. Neither American nor Indian interviewees grasped the irony of this situation. Almost no analyst or policymaker in Washington can mention India or Pakistan without referring to the other, yet U.S. military planners charged with engaging India seldom think about India and Pakistan together because they lie in different AORs.
48. However, several interviewees at PACOM and in Washington expressed their disappointment with what they saw as a missed opportunity after 9/11. They thought it was a mistake not to use more of the infrastructure that India offered during Operation Enduring Freedom. This suggested that the aftermath of 9/11 had prompted some thinking about the blindspots created by India’s position along the PACOM-CENTCOM seam.
49. A South Asia FAO at PACOM points out that ADM Fargo commands a 300,000-soldier force in the PACOM AOR, whereas the U.S. Chief of Staff of the Army commands no troops.

50. An Indian brigadier who used the example of the Bhutanese Army to illustrate that the Indian military treats all militaries as equals underscored this perception. He explained that when the chief of the Bhutanese Army visits India, he is received by the Indian chief of the Army, not relegated to the Eastern Command. Thus he asks why should the Indian chiefs not also be treated with the same basic norms and accorded the same respect?
51. This interview took place in January 2002 when higher level policymakers and PACOM were discussing the Indian naval escorts in the Strait of Malacca.
52. Military officers from PACOM who interact frequently tended to be less critical of the Indian bureaucracy. They referred to the Indian bureaucracy as an annoyance, not an impediment. They appear to have lower expectations regarding India's capability to absorb changes in the Indo-U.S. relationship.
53. During the interview, the Joint Secretary for Planning and Coordination commented on the rapid increase in international engagement since his appointment in 1999. He observed that when he started the position in 1999, he would interact with the U.S. Embassy about once or twice a month. As of February 2002, he interacted with a number of people from the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi on a daily basis. A similar increase in activity has occurred with the many states in the Indian Ocean Basin.
54. This insularity was imposed after Independence partly as a response to the Indian military's close relationship with the British Raj.
55. All the Indian military officers interviewed claimed that the Indian military had only limited contact with the Soviet and Russian militaries, and the little contact they did have was limited to training on the platforms purchased by the Soviets.





# List of Acronyms

<b>AOR</b>	area of responsibility
<b>ARF</b>	ASEAN Regional Forum
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>AWACS</b>	Airborne Warning and Control System
<b>BJP</b>	Bharatiya Janata Party
<b>C2</b>	command and control
<b>CBM</b>	confidence building measures
<b>CENTCOM</b>	U.S. Central Command (also referred to as USCENTCOM)
<b>CONUS</b>	Continental United States
<b>CTBT</b>	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
<b>DAO</b>	Defense Attaché Office
<b>DGMI</b>	Directorate General for Military Intelligence
<b>DIB</b>	defense industrial base
<b>DoD</b>	U.S. Department of Defense
<b>DPG</b>	Defense Policy Group
<b>DR</b>	disaster relief
<b>EEZ</b>	exclusive economic zone
<b>ESG</b>	Executive Steering Group
<b>EUCOM</b>	U.S. European Command (also referred to as USEUCOM)

**A****List of Acronyms**

<b>FAO</b>	Foreign Area Officer
<b>FDI</b>	foreign direct investment
<b>FMS</b>	foreign military sales
<b>GSOMIA</b>	General Security of Military Information Agreement
<b>HA</b>	humanitarian assistance operations
<b>IAF</b>	Indian Air Force
<b>IDS</b>	Integrated Defense Staff
<b>IMET</b>	International Military Education and Training
<b>LOC</b>	Line of Control
<b>MEA</b>	Indian Ministry of External Affairs
<b>ML</b>	Munitions List
<b>MOD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>NPT</b>	Non-Proliferation Treaty
<b>NSAB</b>	National Security Advisory Board
<b>NSC</b>	National Security Council
<b>NSCS</b>	National Security Council Secretariat
<b>OSD</b>	Office of the Secretary of Defense
<b>OSD/ISA</b>	Office of the Secretary of Defense/International Security Affairs
<b>PACAF</b>	Pacific Air Force
<b>PACOM</b>	U.S. Pacific Command (also referred to as USPACOM)
<b>PKO</b>	peacekeeping operations
<b>SLOC</b>	sea lane of communication
<b>SR</b>	search and rescue operations
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>USA</b>	U.S. Army



<b>USAF</b>	U.S. Air Force
<b>USARPAC</b>	U.S. Army Pacific
<b>USD(Policy)</b>	Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
<b>USG</b>	U.S. Government
<b>USN</b>	U.S. Navy
<b>WMD</b>	weapons of mass destruction
<b>9/11</b>	September 11, 2001



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**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
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06 JUN 2003

Ref: 03-F-1357

MEMORANDUM FOR DEFENSE TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER (DTIC)  
ATTN: FOIA POC (MS. KELLY AKERS)  
8725 JOHN J. KINGMAN ROAD, SUITE 944  
FORT BELVOIR, VA 22060-6218

SUBJECT: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request – Mr. Sajit Gandhi

This Office has received and processed to completion a May 5, 2003, FOIA request by Mr. Gandhi, The National Security Archive, that asked for a copy of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) sponsored report, "Indo-US Military Relations: Expectations and Perceptions." The report was prepared for the Director, Net Assessment, OSD/NA, under contract to the Joint Analysis Center (JATAC), which is administratively managed by your Center. At time of its issuance, the distribution section of the report stated that access would be on a limited basis as directed by OSD/NA. The telephone discussion on this subject between Mr. Swiney, this Office, and Ms. Akers, your Center, this date, also refers.

Based on a FOIA review by the sponsoring office, OSD/NA, Mr. Dmitry F. Ponomareff, Executive Assistant (703) 693-6028, provided this Office with a release determination of Grant In Full with a concurrent change in report's distribution to "A", dated May 2, 2003 (copy of the report's cover and documentation page are attached). This determination was concurred in by the Joint Staff; Director, Middle East, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Defense Intelligence Agency; and the Department of State. Accordingly, we ask that your Center update the report's distribution scheme to reflect an "A" code. Our point of contact for this action is Chris Marye at (703) 696-4695 or e-mail at [chris.marye.ctr@whs.mil](mailto:chris.marye.ctr@whs.mil).

Paul J. Jacobsmeyer  
Chief

Attachment:  
As stated